Shojo Beat Manga

Tail of the Moon

Story & Art b

Rinko Ueda

3

Tail of the Moon

Usagi is the granddaughter of the leader of a prestigious ninja village, but she's such a klutz that she's never made it out of the kiddie class. Frustrated with Usagi's lack of progress, her great-grandfather sends her to marry Lord Hanzo and have lots of ninja babies. But the lord has no interest in her or her childbearing potential!

Lord Hanzo readily agrees to Ieyasu's offer to take Usagi away to work as an herbalist—almost as quickly as he agreed with Ieyasu that Usagi doesn't have what it takes to become a ninja! Hanzo seems unconcerned about having Usagi out of his life, but Usagi isn't faring as well. Lonely in a new place, Usagi crawls into Yukimaru's bed, much to his distress!

3

Story & Art by

Rinko Ueda

A romantic ninja adventure!

Shojo Beat

Tail of the Moon

3

Story & Art by

Rinko Ueda

Soji becomes embroiled in a Mibu-Roshi assassination plot!

Kaze Hikaru

by Taeko Watanabe

Shojo Beat

THE REAL DRAMA BEGINS IN...

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Tail of the Moon

Volume 3

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Story Thus Far...

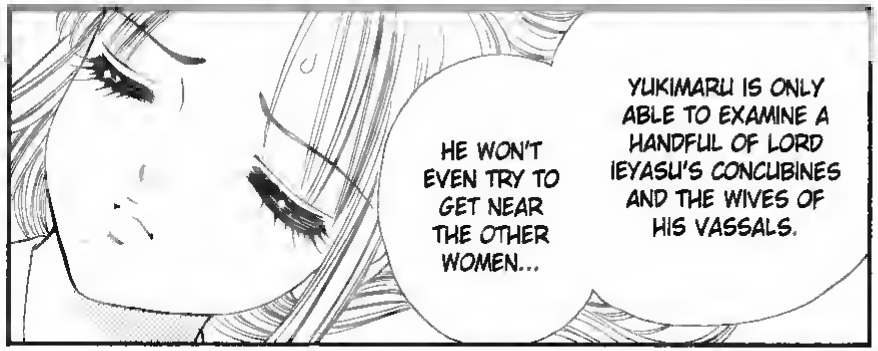
It is the Era of the Warring States. Usagi is a failure as a ninja, but she is a skilled herbalist. At the age of 15, she is still unable to qualify as a ninja, so she is suddenly ordered to get married!

The man who has been selected for her is Hattori Hanzo (aka "Shimo no Hanzo"), the most handsome man in all of Iga. But after rushing over to meet Hanzo, she is told by Hanzo himself that he has no intention of getting married. Usagi begins to train hard so that Hanzo will accept her.

Usagi and her friends journey to Hamamatsu to help the lovers Kami no Hanzou and Sara, but Usagi is captured and thrown into the castle dungeon! Luckily, with the help of Tokugawa Ieyasu, Hanzou and Sara are permitted to be together, but in exchange Usagi must remain in Hamamatsu as Ieyasu's herbalist.

Usagi starts her new life working with the senior herbalist Yukimaru. Yukimaru looks and sounds like a beautiful girl, but Usagi discovers that Yukimaru is really a boy...?!

IT TOOK HIM TWO YEARS TO GET USED TO HER.
BUT HE SEEMED FINE WHEN HE WAS WITH YOUR WIFE...
HUH?!
WHAT?
...YUKIMARU HAS A FEAR OF WOMEN.


HE WON'T EVEN TRY TO GET NEAR THE OTHER WOMEN...
YUKIMARU IS ONLY ABLE TO EXAMINE A HANDFUL OF LORD IEYASU'S CONCUBINES AND THE WIVES OF HIS VASSALS.

HUH...?
YES, YUKIMARU IS WEIRD.
THAT'S WEIRD!!

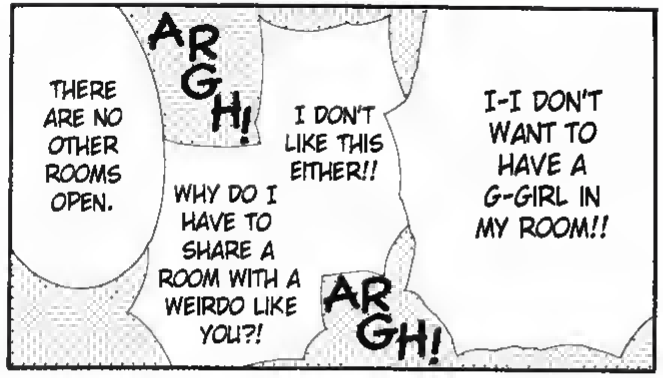
GET AWAY FROM ME!!
HOW DARE YOU DECEIVE ME!!
FONK
OUCH!
G-GIRL!!
LOOM
OH...
...YOU'VE REGAINED CONSCIOUS-NESS, YUKI?!

WELL, YUKI LOOKS AND SOUNDS LIKE A GIRL...
...SO YOU WERE BOTH SHARING THE SAME BATH, NOT KNOWING EACH OTHER'S GENDER.
HMM...

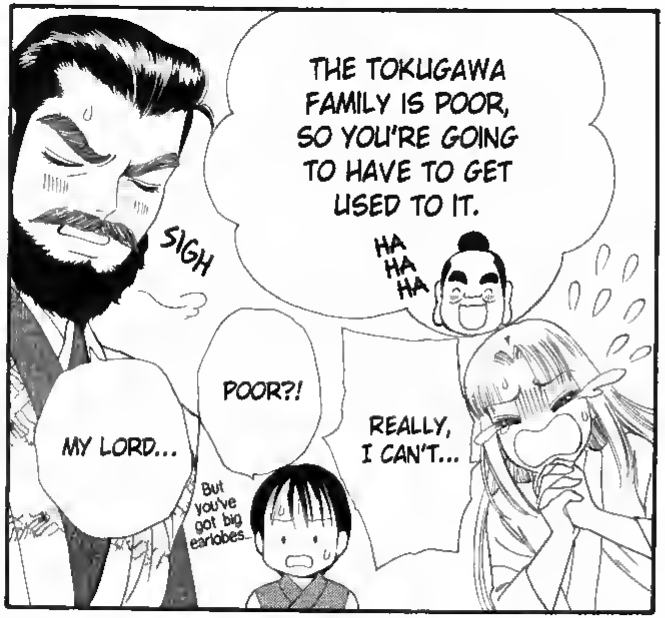
AND IT SEEMS YUKI THOUGHT I WAS A BOY TOO...
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...

IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME THAT YUKI WAS A BOY...

Hi! It's Ue-Rin here. I'd like to write about the time I went to Iga to do some research...
Ue-Rin's Fashion During the Research Trip
I can go anywhere!
A hardy waterproof parka so I can move about in the rain
A backpack that won't give me shoulder cramps
Sneakers so I can walk for a long time
Things I Took on the Trip
Guide Book
Pens and Pencils
Camera and Film
Lunch that my mom made for me
*Only when I use my parents house as the center of my operations.
It's a waste of money if you buy lunch, so take it with you!!
I don't want it! It's heavy!
MAMA


THERE ARE NO OTHER ROOMS OPEN.
ARGH!
I DON'T LIKE THIS EITHER!!
WHY DO I HAVE TO SHARE A ROOM WITH A WEIRDO LIKE YOU?!
ARGH!
I-I DON'T WANT TO HAVE A G-GIRL IN MY ROOM!!

STOP COMPLAINING!!
ARGH! ARGH!
MY LORD IS TRYING TO MAKE YUKIMARU OVERCOME HIS GYNOPHOBIA...


THE TOKUGAWA FAMILY IS POOR, SO YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET USED TO IT.
HA HA HA
SIGH
MY LORD...
POOR?!
But you've got big earlobes.
REALLY, I CAN'T...

ARGH!
ARGH!
YOU APOLOGIZE FIRST!!
STOP IT!
YOU TWO ARE SURE NOISY.
TMP
TMP
MY LORD!!

WELL, YOU THOUGHT I WAS A GIRL...
HOW RUDE!!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MISTOOK ME FOR A BOY IN THE FIRST PLACE, OKAY?!
I WANT YOU TO APOLOGIZE!!

YES SIR!
OVER HERE.

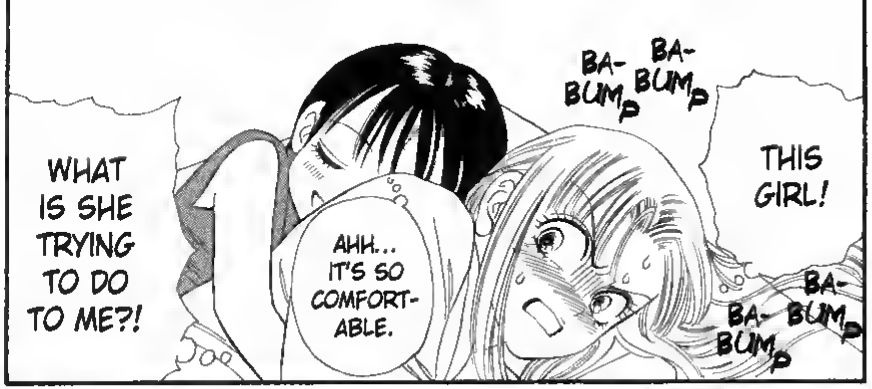
WHAT?
USAGI...
...THIS IS WHERE YOU WILL SLEEP FROM NOW ON.
BE NICE TO YUKIMARU.

WHY FEEL SORRY FOR HER?
WAARGH! U-USA'S ALL ALONE RIGHT NOW AND...
USAGI IS NOT ALONE.
LORD IEYASU IS THERE, AS WELL AS MY RELATIVES IN HAMAMATSU.
BUT...
OH!
IF YOU FEEL LONELY, YOU CAN ALWAYS WRITE HER A LETTER.
I'LL TEACH YOU THEN.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO WRITE!
WAARGH!
REALLY?!
UH-HUH!
I REALLY LIKE HER!!
YOU REALLY LIKE USAGI, DON'T YOU?

DO YOU WANT TO SLEEP HERE?
YES!!
NO...
WHAT IS IT, MAMEZO?
YOU NEED THE BATH-ROOM?
SEGACHI, IGA
HANZO...
I CAN'T SLEEP.
I...
YIP
HEE HEE
IT MUST BE BECAUSE YOU MISS USAGI.
SOB SOB
I...
I FEEL SORRY FOR USA!
WAH...
SORRY! I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT...
WHAARGH!

I CAN'T SLEEP!!
WIDE AWAKE
I WONDER IF HANZO AND THE OTHERS ARE BACK IN IGA?
...
TURN
MAYBE HANZO WOULD NEVER HAVE LET ME GO IF I LOOKED MORE FEMININE.
TOSS
I ALWAYS HAD GOEMON OR MAMEZO AS MY COMFORT PILLOW...
COME TO THINK OF IT, I'VE NEVER SLEPT ALONE.
IT'S A MOKUME OBAKE GHOST!!
AAARGH!

BAM
SWIP
DON'T TALK TO ME!!
...
YUKI, WHY DO YOU HATE WOMEN?
O-OKAY?!
D-DON'T YOU DARE COME TO THIS SIDE. UNDERSTAND?!
YUKI REALLY IS SUCH A WEIRDO!!
FINE THEN!
GOOD NIGHT!!
...I CAN'T BELIEVE HE THOUGHT I WAS A BOY!
I ADMIT I WAS WRONG TO MISTAKE HIM FOR A GIRL, BUT...
...
DO I LOOK LIKE A GUY?
YOU'RE A GIRL?!
COME TO THINK OF IT, YURI THOUGHT I WAS A BOY TOO WHEN WE MET...


WHAT IS SHE TRYING TO DO TO ME?!
AHH... IT'S SO COMFORT-ABLE.
BA-BUMP BA-BUMP
THIS GIRL!
BA-BUMP BA-BUMP

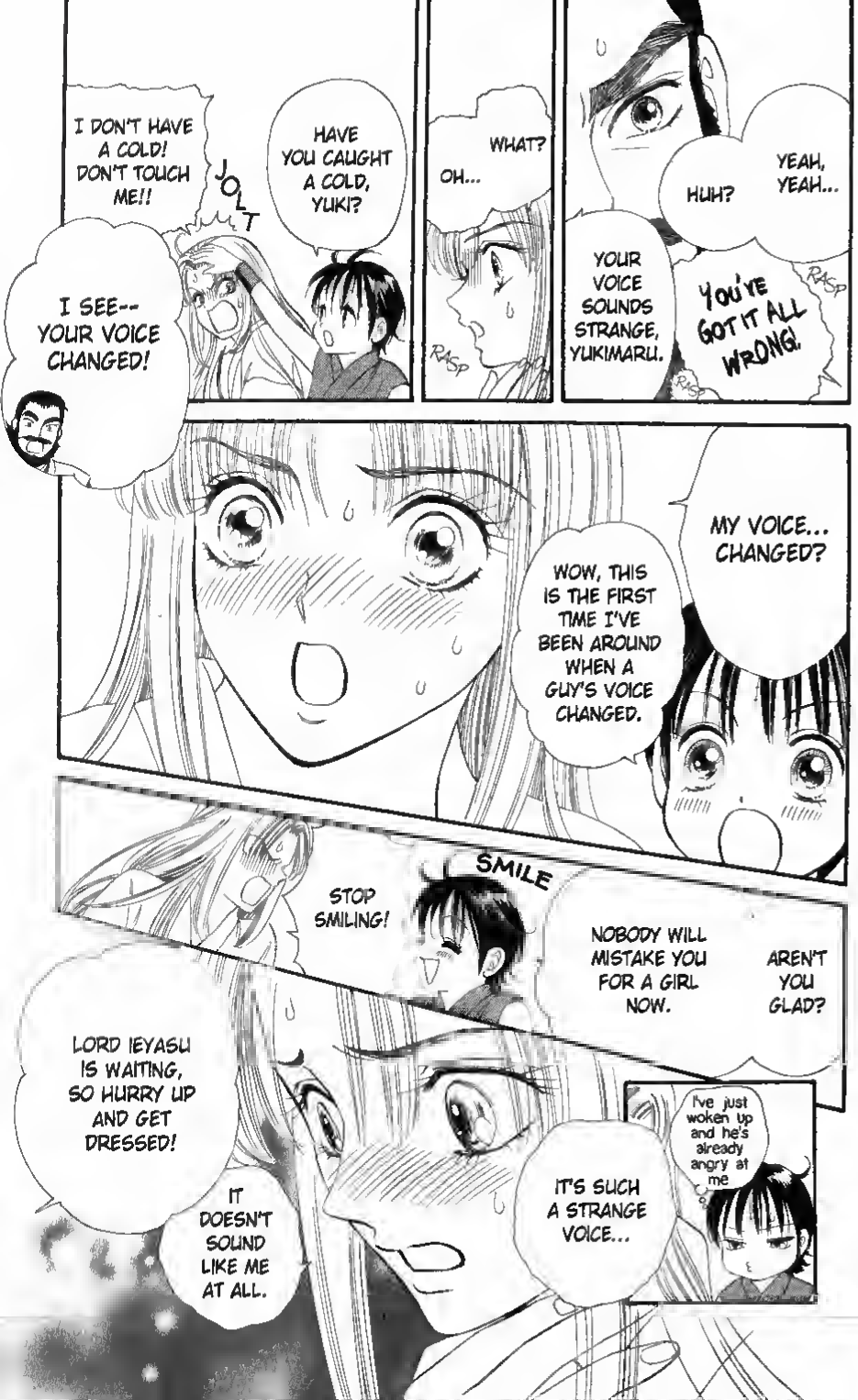
SHE MUST BE TRYING TO USE HER KUNOICHI TRICKS ON ME TO STEAL THE RECIPES FOR MY MEDICINES!!
...SHE'S A KUNOICHI FROM IGA!!
I-I KNOW...
ZZZ...

SNORE SNORE
THIS HAS GOT TO BE A CONSPIR-ACY!!

ZWAK
LORD IEYASU IS WAITING FOR YOU!!
YOU'RE STILL IN BED?!
SNORE SNORE

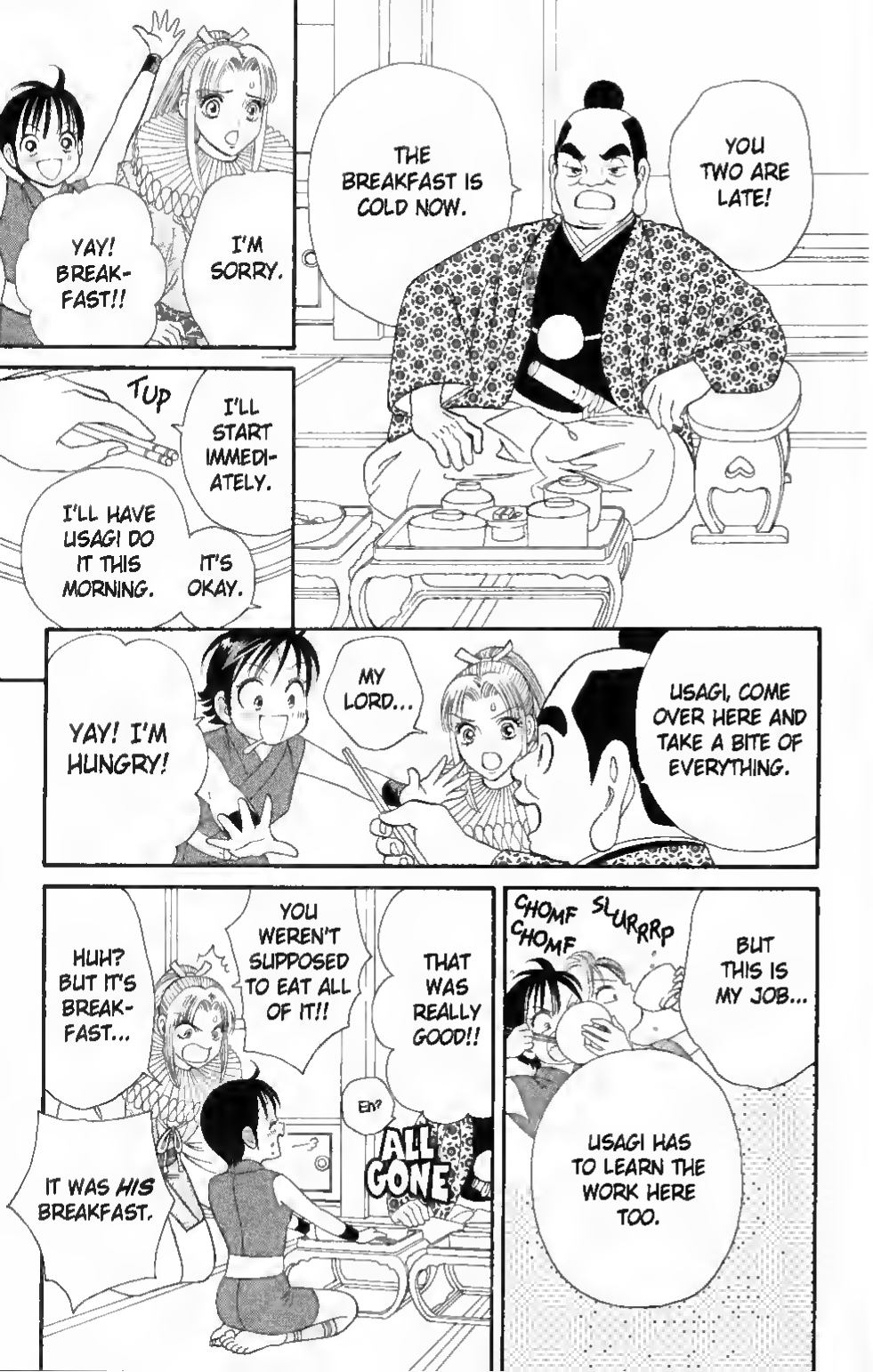
SHIVER SHIVER
WHA?!
YUKI...
KREEK
H-HOW COULD THEY LET A GIRL SLEEP IN MY ROOM? THEY MUST WANT TO TORMENT ME!!
IT'S A CONSPIR-ACY...
!
FORGIVE ME!
BUT LET ME SLEEP WITH YOU!!

EEEK!
BORG
I CAN'T GO TO SLEEP UNLESS I'M HUGGING SOMEONE!!
I'M SORRY!!

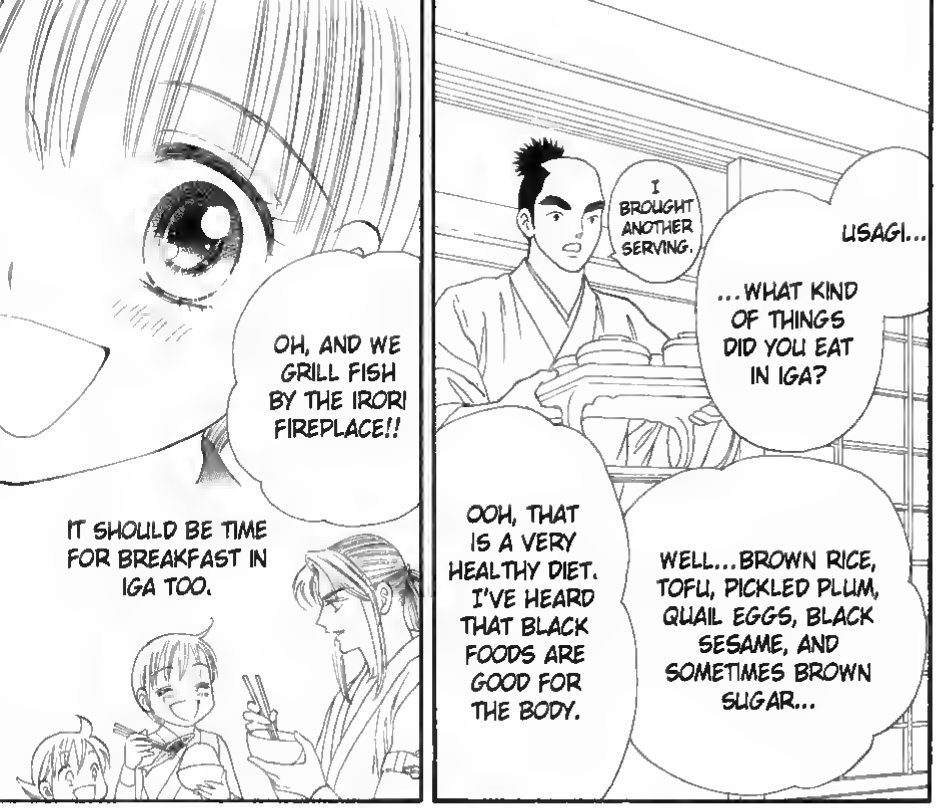

I DON'T HAVE A COLD! DON'T TOUCH ME!!
JOLT
HAVE YOU CAUGHT A COLD, YUKI?
I SEE-- YOUR VOICE CHANGED!
WHAT?
OH...
RASP
YOUR VOICE SOUNDS STRANGE, YUKIMARU.
HUH?
YEAH, YEAH...
YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG!
RASP
MY VOICE... CHANGED?
WOW, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN AROUND WHEN A GUY'S VOICE CHANGED.
SMILE
STOP SMILING!
NOBODY WILL MISTAKE YOU FOR A GIRL NOW.
AREN'T YOU GLAD?
LORD IEYASU IS WAITING, SO HURRY UP AND GET DRESSED!
IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE ME AT ALL.
IT'S SUCH A STRANGE VOICE...
I've just woken up and he's already angry at me

ARGH!
YOU TWO... I KNEW IT.
SHAKE
SHAKE
MMM.
ZZZ ZZZ
HUH?!

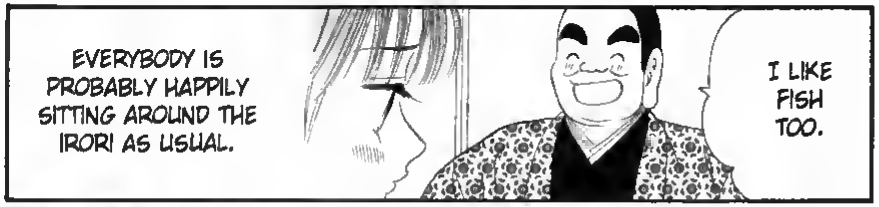
THIS GIRL FORCED HERSELF ON ME!
RASP
RASP
RASP
IT'S NOT WHAT IT SEEMS!
OH...
GOOD MORNING.
WELL, I GUESS THIS IS THE NATURAL COURSE OF THINGS...
AAARGH! G-GIRL!!
AHEM


YAY! BREAK-FAST!!
I'M SORRY.
THE BREAKFAST IS COLD NOW.
YOU TWO ARE LATE!
TUP
I'LL START IMMEDI-ATELY.
I'LL HAVE USAGI DO IT THIS MORNING.
IT'S OKAY.
YAY! I'M HUNGRY!
MY LORD...
USAGI, COME OVER HERE AND TAKE A BITE OF EVERYTHING.
HUH? BUT IT'S BREAK-FAST...
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO EAT ALL OF IT!!
THAT WAS REALLY GOOD!!
EH?
ALL GONE
IT WAS HIS BREAKFAST.
CHOMF SLURRRP CHOMF
BUT THIS IS MY JOB...
USAGI HAS TO LEARN THE WORK HERE TOO.

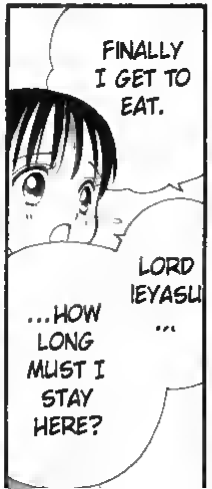
SO YOU'VE BECOME A REAL MAN AT LAST!!
WHAT?
SO THIS IS YOUR GIRL-FRIEND, YUKIMARU?
TAP TAP TAP TAP
GRR
YUKI, WAIT UP!
TMP
TMP
OH, YOUR VOICE CHANGED TOO, HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
SH-SHE'S NOT MY GIRLFRIEND!
HE MEANS ME?!
WHAT?
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU!
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN MAKE YUKIMARU INTO A REAL MAN!!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S WEIRD!!
AREN'T YOU AWARE OF IT?!
BUT YOU ARE WEIRD.
TMP
TMP
TMP
THAT'S QUITE A CHANGE...
YUKIMARU'S TALKING TO A GIRL.
HUH?
YUKI IS WEIRD, BUT THAT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.
THAT'S RIGHT!
WEIRD?!
What an insult!!


OH, AND WE GRILL FISH BY THE IRORI FIREPLACE!!
IT SHOULD BE TIME FOR BREAKFAST IN IGA TOO.

I BROUGHT ANOTHER SERVING.
USAGI...
...WHAT KIND OF THINGS DID YOU EAT IN IGA?
OOH, THAT IS A VERY HEALTHY DIET. I'VE HEARD THAT BLACK FOODS ARE GOOD FOR THE BODY.
WELL...BROWN RICE, TOFU, PICKLED PLUM, QUAIL EGGS, BLACK SESAME, AND SOMETIMES BROWN SUGAR...

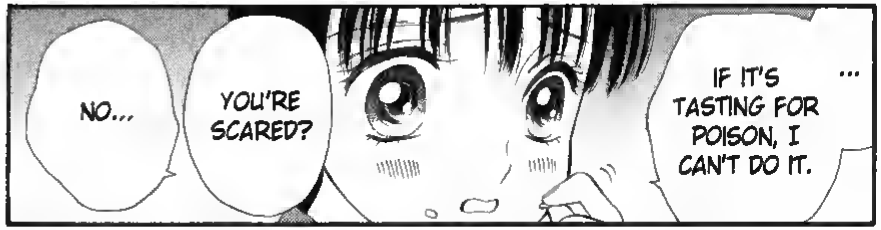

EVERYBODY IS PROBABLY HAPPILY SITTING AROUND THE IRORI AS USUAL.
I LIKE FISH TOO.

FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.


FINALLY I GET TO EAT.
LORD IEYASU...
...HOW LONG MUST I STAY HERE?

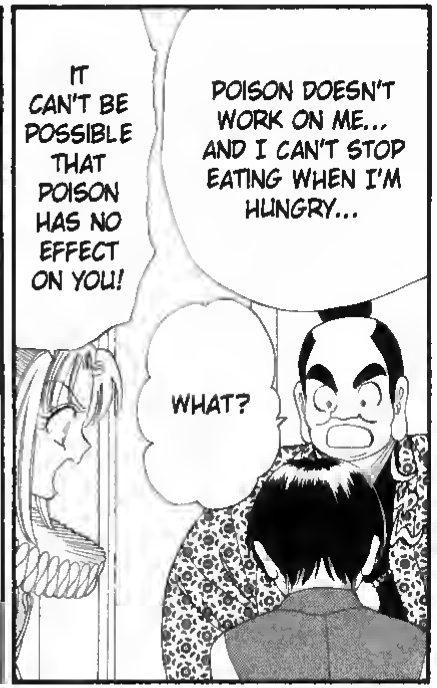
MY FAVORITE FISH IS SEA BREAM.
MY LORD...
...THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR FOOD.

IT'S AN HONORABLE JOB THAT REQUIRES THE LORD'S TRUST, YOU KNOW?!
POISON?
YOUR JOB IS TO TASTE MY FOOD TO CHECK FOR POISON.

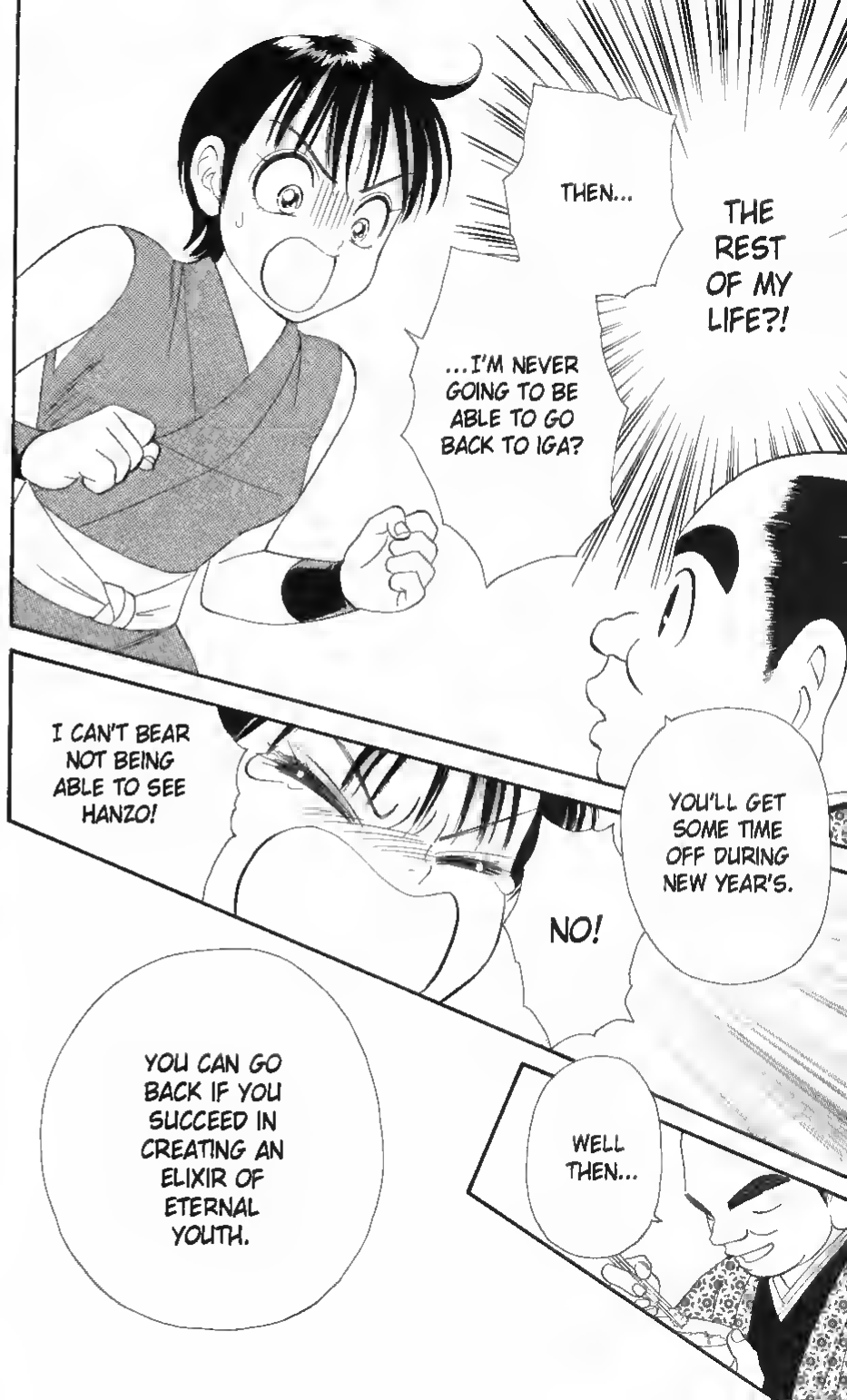

NO...
YOU'RE SCARED?
IF IT'S TASTING FOR POISON, I CAN'T DO IT.
...

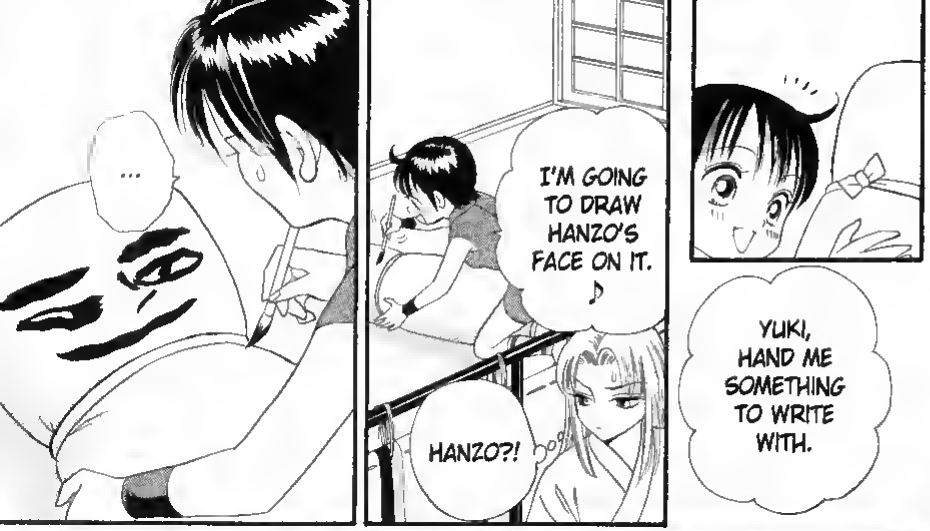
MAYBE I SHOULD START TRAINING TOO?
I'M SO ENVIOUS THAT POISON HAS NO EFFECT ON YOU.
Huh?
NO WAY!!

NINJA TAKE SMALL AMOUNTS OF POISON WHEN THEY'RE YOUNG SO THEIR BODIES ADAPT TO IT.


IT CAN'T BE POSSIBLE THAT POISON HAS NO EFFECT ON YOU!
POISON DOESN'T WORK ON ME... AND I CAN'T STOP EATING WHEN I'M HUNGRY...
WHAT?

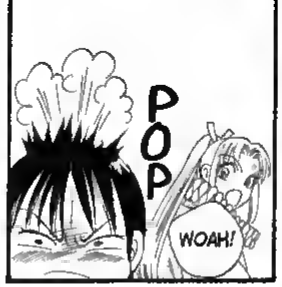
AN ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH? THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
UMM...
YUKIMARU, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO OVERCOME YOUR DISLIKE OF WOMEN OR IT'S REALLY GOING TO AFFECT YOUR CAREER.
I-I CAN'T TEAM UP WITH A GIRL!!
I WANT YOU TWO TO TEAM UP TO MAKE THE ELIXIR.
YUKIMARU HAS BEEN RESEARCHING IT, BUT HE'S COME TO A DEAD END.
A MEDICINE THAT STOPS YOU FROM AGEING AND DYING?!
AN ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH...?


YOU CAN GO BACK IF YOU SUCCEED IN CREATING AN ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH.
WELL THEN...
NO!
I CAN'T BEAR NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE HANZO!
YOU'LL GET SOME TIME OFF DURING NEW YEAR'S.
...I'M NEVER GOING TO BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO IGA?
THEN...
THE REST OF MY LIFE?!


...
I'M GOING TO DRAW HANZO'S FACE ON IT. ♪
HANZO?!
YUKI, HAND ME SOMETHING TO WRITE WITH.

NOT THE BEARDED HANZO! I WANTED TO DRAW HANZO FROM IGA.
ISN'T IT BECAUSE YOU FORGOT TO DRAW THE BEARD?
AAARGH! HANZO'S FACE LOOKS WEIRD!!

I WANT TO GO BACK TO IGA...
UH-HUH.
THE PERSON I'M IN LOVE WITH...
HANZO FROM IGA?
...TO WHERE HANZO IS.


POP
WOAH!

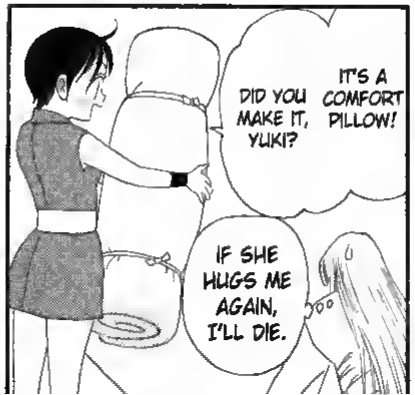
I hardly ever use my head...
WAARGH! I'VE GOT A HEADACHE BECAUSE I THOUGHT TOO MUCH.

No
Nah
Really dangerous
HMM

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, OKAY?!
YEAH, I THOUGHT SO TOO.

UNLESS I MAKE AN ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH, I WON'T BE ALLOWED TO GO BACK TO IGA.
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

HUH?
BOOF
HERE, HUG THIS WHEN YOU SLEEP!


DID YOU MAKE IT, YUKI?
IT'S A COMFORT PILLOW!
IF SHE HUGS ME AGAIN, I'LL DIE.

I'LL GET READY FOR BED TOO.
OH...
...YOU'RE GOING TO BED ALREADY, YUKI?

IF I CATCH A MERMAID, I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO IGA!!
A MERMAID!!
Is it like this...
or like this?!
HUFF
HUFF
...I NEVER KNEW SUCH A STRANGE CREATURE EXISTED IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
HALF HUMAN AND HALF FISH...
THEY DON'T EXIST...
ZUFF
ZUFF
ZUFF
ZUFF

I'M GOING TO MAKE AN ELIXIR NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES, AND GO BACK TO IGA!!
HEY...
...WHAT KIND OF HERBS SHOULD I USE TO MAKE AN ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH?
I-I DON'T KNOW.
WHY DON'T YOU ASK YUKIMARU?
YUKI DOESN'T KNOW EITHER.
WELL, THE MEAT OF THE MERMAID IS SAID TO HAVE THE POWER OF ETERNAL YOUTH.
WH-WHAT'S A MERMAID?!
THAT'S ONLY A LEGEND, ISN'T IT?
IT'S A CREATURE THAT'S HALF HUMAN AND HALF FISH.

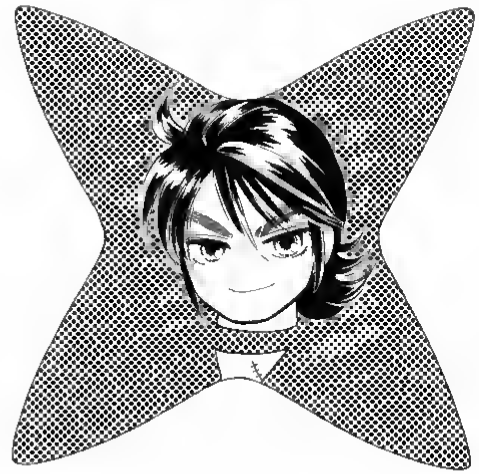
THANKS!!
UH... THERE'S ONE RIGHT TO THE SOUTH OF HERE...
WHERE CAN I FIND ONE?
THE SEA?!
IN THE SEA, OF COURSE.
WHICH WAY IS IT TO THE SEA?!
DASH
OF COURSE NOT!
HA HA HA HA
SH-SHE REALLY BELIEVED IT?!

IF THE SEA IS THIS LARGE, THERE HAS TO BE A MERMAID SOMEWHERE!!
YES... I DO.
DO YOU LIKE USA TOO, HANZO?!

!!
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN IT!!
THIS IS THE SEA?!
I... ...R-E-A-L-L-Y L-I-K-E Y-O-U... ...U-S-A!!
HOW ARE
H-O-W... ...A-R-E... ...Y-O-U...

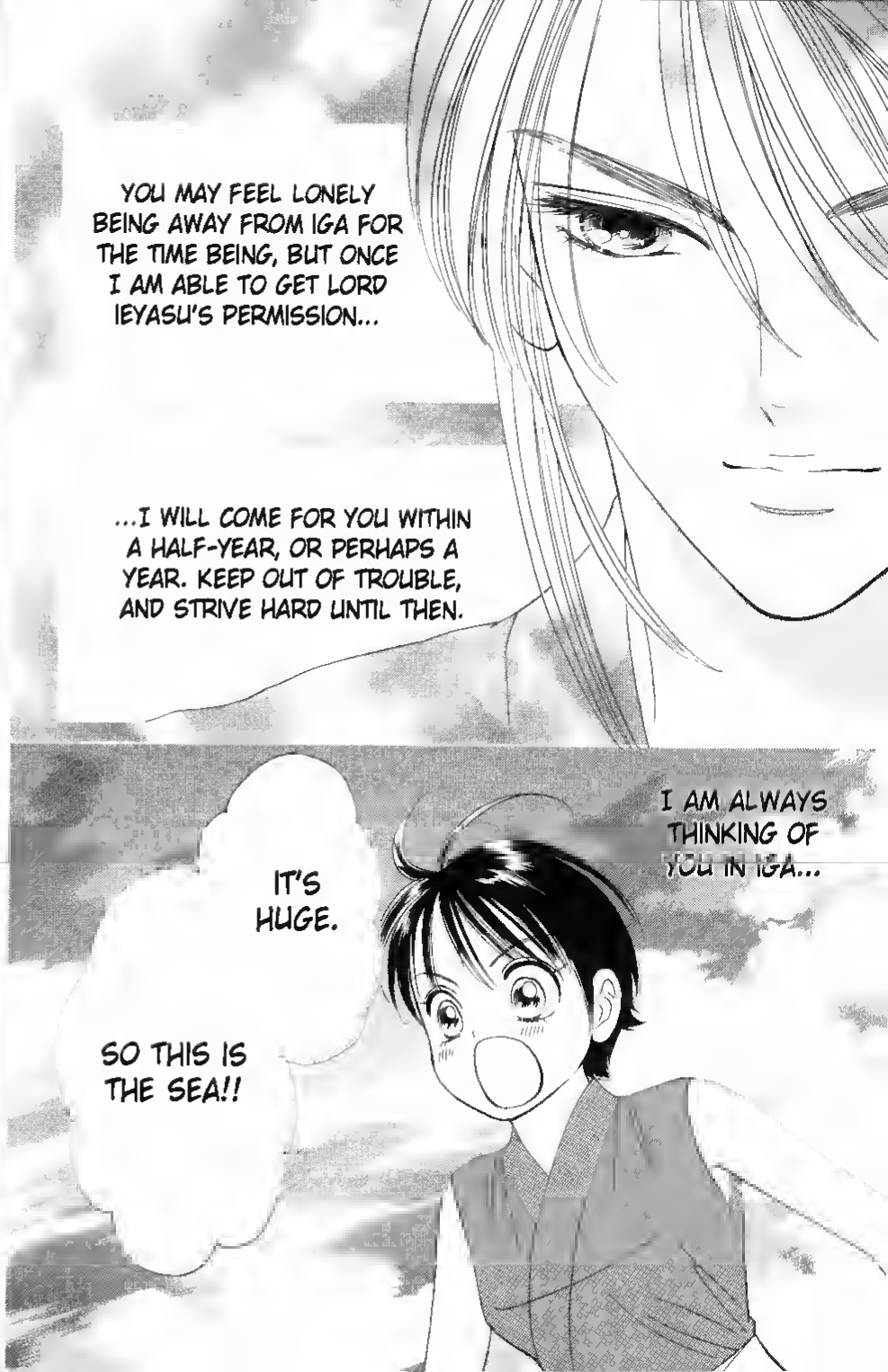
Tail of the Moon

Chapter 16



WELL DONE, MAMEZO.
HEE!
IT'S THE FIRST LETTER I'VE EVER WRITTEN.
DEAR USAGI, HOW ARE YOU DOING? I REALLY LIKE YOU.
LOOK, LOOK!
I HOPE YOU ARE WELL.
DEAR USAGI
YOU MAY HOLD A GRUDGE AGAINST ME FOR LEAVING YOU IN HAMAMATSU.
BUT I SINCERELY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR YOU TO BECOME AN HERBALIST AND HELP PEOPLE RATHER THAN BECOME A NINJA.

FUJA
WHAT'S THIS?
CHOMP
MUNCH MUNCH
THE WATER MOVES...
HUH?
SHWAAA
ACK!
TMP TMP
MAYBE I CAN FIND A MERMAID?
I'M GOING TO TAKE IT BACK WITH ME.
YUMMY! ♡
I WONDER IF THESE ARE EDIBLE TOO?
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO BE PLAYING AROUND!!
OH!
I HAVE TO FIND A MERMAID!!
M-MOUNTAIN APE...
IT'S SO SALTY!!
PHOOT PHOOT
GLUG GLUG
BUT IT'S A LITTLE SALTY...
PHOOT


YOU MAY FEEL LONELY BEING AWAY FROM IGA FOR THE TIME BEING, BUT ONCE I AM ABLE TO GET LORD IEYASU'S PERMISSION...
...I WILL COME FOR YOU WITHIN A HALF-YEAR, OR PERHAPS A YEAR. KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE, AND STRIVE HARD UNTIL THEN.
I AM ALWAYS THINKING OF YOU IN IGA...
IT'S HUGE.
SO THIS IS THE SEA!!

I THINK I'LL GO LOOK IN ANOTHER PLACE.
I CAN'T FIND ONE...
OOOH.

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH WATER ALL OF A SUDDEN?
WHY...
HUH?

SOMEBODY, HELP ME!
GRAB
BEFORE, HANZO OR GOEMON WOULD ALWAYS HELP ME WHEN I NEEDED IT...
ANYBODY...
...BUT I'M NOT IN IGA ANY-MORE...

What's happening?
DID THIS ROCK MOVE OR SOME-THING?
SPASH
SPASH

OOF!
SHUMPSH

MERMAID?!
UH-HUH.
A CREATURE THAT'S HALF HUMAN AND HALF FISH.
OH, MISTER, DO YOU LIVE AROUND HERE?
YEAH.
WHERE CAN I FIND A MERMAID?
HMM. THERE'S A LOT OF STRANGE THINGS, BUT I DON'T SEE ANY MERMAIDS.
IT'S DANGEROUS TO BE UP ON THOSE ROCKS, GIRL.

WHAT?!
THERE'S NO SUCH THING!
HA HA HA HA

MERMAIDS ARE PROBABLY A RARE DELICACY, SO HE DOESN'T WANT TO TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND ONE.
SHWAA
I SEE...
BUT IF YOU FIND ONE, DON'T FORGET TO SHOW ME!
GOODBYE
HEY, MISTER!

...
THEY DON'T EXIST?
IF THEY DID, I WOULDN'T BE IN THIS SITUATION.
...WHAT SHOULD I DO?
THEN...
...I'VE GOT NO IDEA OF HOW I'M SUPPOSED TO MAKE IT...
THE ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH...
I CAN'T SEE HANZO...
...I CAN'T GO BACK TO IGA...
...BUT IF I DON'T MAKE IT...
MERMAIDS DON'T EXIST.
HUH?
IT'S ONLY A LEGEND.
YOU REALLY ARE A MOUNTAIN APE! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU FELL FOR THAT AND CAME ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE SEA TO FIND ONE!

GRAB HOLD OF THIS!!
YUKI.
HURRY!!
SPOOSH
O-OKAY!!
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF NOT BEING ABLE TO SWIM WHEN YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A NINJA?!
THANKS, YUKI...
HEEZE
HEEZE
DID YOU COME TO LOOK FOR THE MERMAID TOO, YUKI?

NOOOO! DOGS BITE!
THIS IS A PART OF YOUR TRAINING.
NIP
NIP
IT'S ONLY A CUTE PUPPY.
IT DOESN'T HURT EVEN IF YOU GET BITTEN.
WAAARGH!
I HATE DOGS!!
DASH
A NINJA SHOULD'NT BE SCARED OF DOGS!
IT'S KUROKAGE'S PUPPY.
YOU CAN TRAIN THIS PUPPY TO BECOME A FINE NINJA DOG.
YAP
!!

THINK OF THIS PUPPY AS USAGI AND TAKE CARE OF...
SHIIII

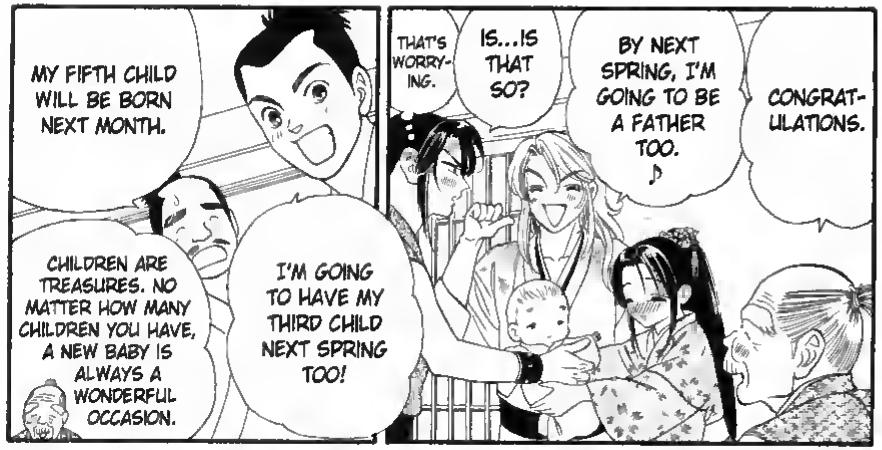
DON'T LEAVE THE DOG HERE!!
WAAAAARGH!
...I'M SURE YOU'RE GOING TO ENJOY TAKING CARE OF IT.
THAT DOG IS JUST LIKE USAGI...
SNIFF SNIFF
TROMP
TROMP
SIGH
WHAT A STUPID DOG!!

WAAH!
YOU CAN PLAY BY YOURSELF TODAY.
I HAVE SOME WORK TO DO.
VERY GOOD.
LET'S WRITE A LETTER TOGETHER AGAIN!
HANZO!
I FINISHED THE SWEEPING AND CLEANING UP.

TROMP
TROMP

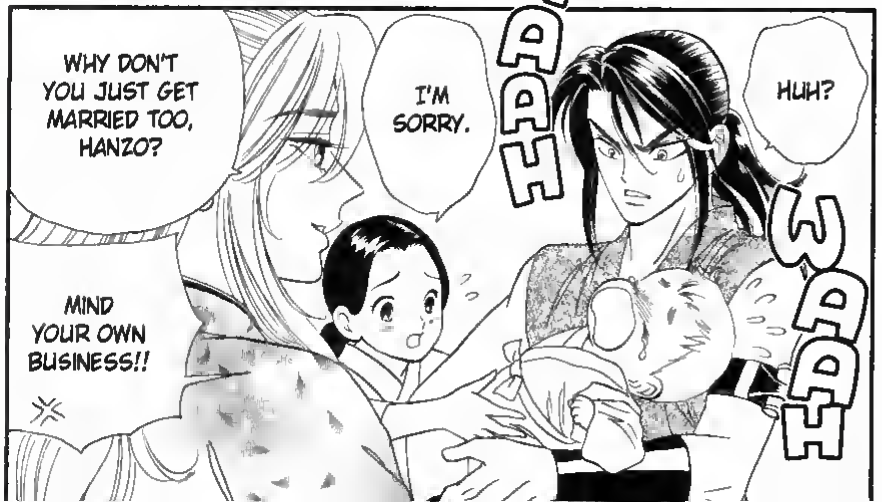
TROMP
TROMP

HUH?
MAMEZO, IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO, WHY DON'T YOU TAKE CARE OF THIS?
I RO HA
I...
RO...
HA...


MY FIFTH CHILD WILL BE BORN NEXT MONTH.
CHILDREN ARE TREASURES. NO MATTER HOW MANY CHILDREN YOU HAVE, A NEW BABY IS ALWAYS A WONDERFUL OCCASION.
I'M GOING TO HAVE MY THIRD CHILD NEXT SPRING TOO!
THAT'S WORRY-ING.
IS...IS THAT SO?
BY NEXT SPRING, I'M GOING TO BE A FATHER TOO. ♪
CONGRAT-ULATIONS.

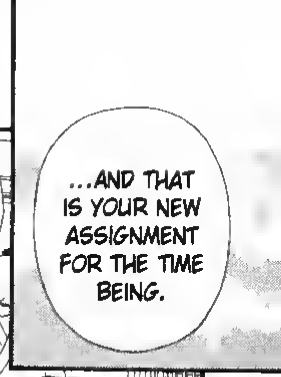
HMPH
I ONLY WISH THAT MASTER HANZO WOULD ALSO SHARE THAT WONDERFUL NEWS SOON.
SIGH

THAT AGAIN...


WHY DON'T YOU JUST GET MARRIED TOO, HANZO?
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!!
I'M SORRY.
WAAAH
HUH?
WAAAH

SURE, I'LL THINK OF A GOOD NAME FOR HIM.
MY, MY, HE LOOKS LIKE A FINE BOY.

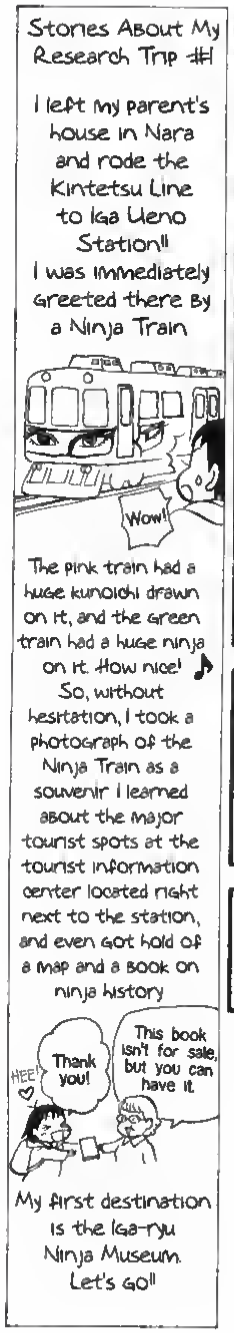
SO IT'S KYUSHU THIS TIME... IT SURE IS FAR AWAY...
MASTER HANZO...
...WOULD YOU NAME MY NEWBORN SON?

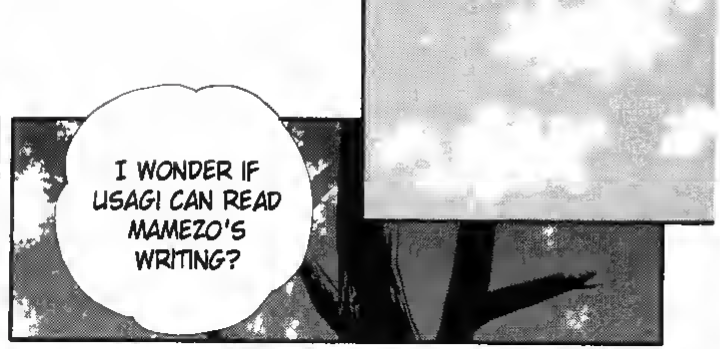

...AND THAT IS YOUR NEW ASSIGNMENT FOR THE TIME BEING.

PRINCESS...
HANZOU...
CAN I HOLD HIM TOO?
SARA'S PREGNANT WITH MY CHILD.
WHAT?!
OH...
HANZO...
...ACTU-ALLY...
I HOPE OUR KID WILL BE THIS CUTE.
HE'S SO CUTE.
DON'T BE TOO HASTY...

UNLIKE YOU, I'M NOT THAT KEEN ON BEING POPULAR WITH WOMEN!!
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO STOP FROWNING OR YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE POPULAR WITH WOMEN.
GOEMON! ♡
MASTER HANZO HAS YURI, SO...
THAT GIRL IS HANZO'S PROSPECTIVE BRIDE...?
...
I HAD SOMETHING I HAD TO DO.
CLING~♡
HEY! ♡ I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO GET BACK!
WHY ISN'T HANZO POPULAR WITH WOMEN...?
WHY IS THERE...
...AN UNEASY ATMOSPHERE ALL AROUND ME ALL OF A SUDDEN?!
SIGH

I CAN'T TAKE CARE OF A DOG!
HUH?!
AAARGH!
JUMP
HE'S SO CUTE. ♡
WAAGH!
GOEMON, HELP ME!
YAP YAP
WHAT'S THE PUPPY'S NAME?
LICK
LICK
SOB SOB
BUT...!
IF YOU DON'T OVERCOME YOUR FEAR OF DOGS, YOU'LL NEVER BECOME A FINE NINJA.
MAMEZO, IF YOU'RE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF THIS DOG, I'LL TAKE YOU TO WHERE USAGI IS.
REALLY?
YIP
TOSS
IT'S NOT CUTE AT ALL!
HANZO WANTED ME TO TAKE CARE OF IT INSTEAD OF USA, SO...
HMPH
IT'S USA.
YOU NAMED THIS DOG USA?

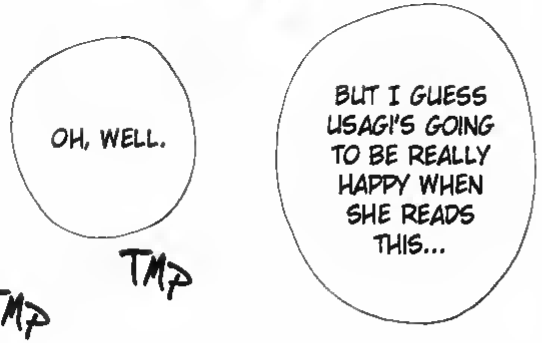

Stories About My Research Trip #1
I left my parent's house in Nara and rode the Kintetsu Line to Iga Ueno Station!! I was immediately greeted there by a Ninja Train
Wow!
The pink train had a huge kunoichi drawn on it, and the green train had a huge ninja on it. How nice! ♪
So, without hesitation, I took a photograph of the Ninja Train as a souvenir. I learned about the major tourist spots at the tourist information center located right next to the station, and even got hold of a map and a book on ninja history.
HEE!
Thank you!
This book isn't for sale, but you can have it.
My first destination is the Iga-ryu Ninja Museum. Let's go!!


I WONDER IF USAGI CAN READ MAMEZO'S WRITING?

HE'S GOING BACK FOR HER?!
AND THIS ONE IS FROM HANZO...
WHAT?!

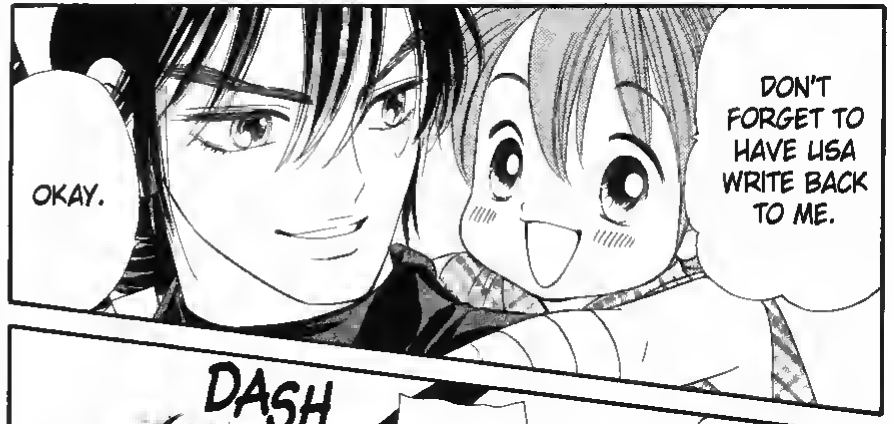
CRSH
DAMN IT! HOW CAN HE TREAT HER LIKE THIS?!

HMMM..
...


OH, WELL.
BUT I GUESS USAGI'S GOING TO BE REALLY HAPPY WHEN SHE READS THIS...
TMP
TMP

TROMP TROMP
GOEMON, I'M SORRY TO HAVE TO ASK YOU TO GO OUT AGAIN, BUT CAN YOU DELIVER THESE LETTERS TO USAGI?
OH!
IT'S THE LETTER I WROTE!!
NIP NIP

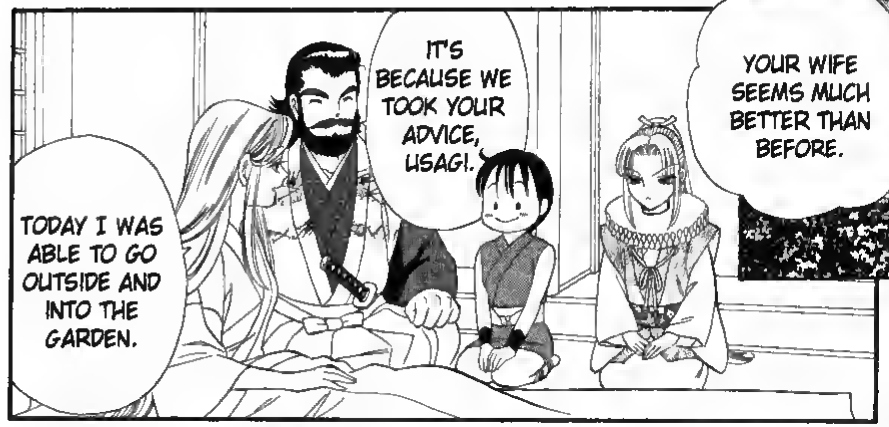
THERE ARE TWO LETTERS, ONE FROM MAMEZO AND ONE FROM ME.
OH.
GOEMON IS SUPPOSED TO BE TEACHING ME!
DOING CHORES AROUND THE HOUSE IS PART OF YOUR TRAINING.
HOW MEAN!


DON'T FORGET TO HAVE USA WRITE BACK TO ME.
OKAY.

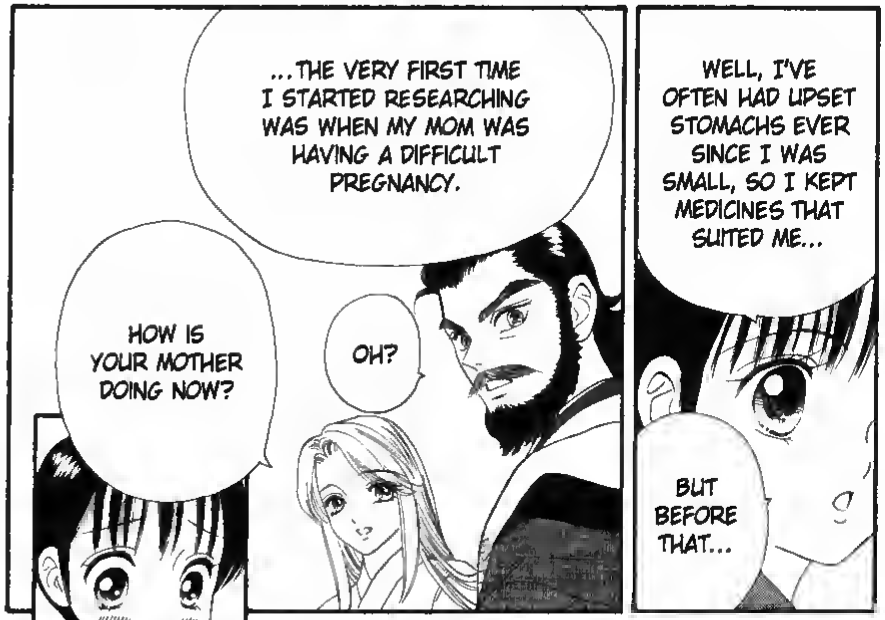
DASH
GOEMON!
BE CAREFUL.
WELL, SEE YOU LATER.

I APOLOGIZE FOR MAKING YOU TALK ABOUT IT.
OH DEAR.
OH NO, IT HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO.
SHE DIED...
...ALONG WITH THE BABY.
YOU'RE A STRONG GIRL. I'M SURE YOUR MOTHER IN HEAVEN FEELS PROUD OF YOU.
HEE.♡ THANKS.

I BET MY MOTHER WOULD REALLY BE HAPPY IF I COULD MAKE THE ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH, BUT...
BUT THERE IS A REASON BEHIND MY LORD'S REQUEST FOR SUCH AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK.
RIGHT.
BUT I'VE GOT NO CLUE AS TO HOW I'M SUPPOSED TO MAKE SUCH A THING...


TODAY I WAS ABLE TO GO OUTSIDE AND INTO THE GARDEN.
IT'S BECAUSE WE TOOK YOUR ADVICE, USAGI.
YOUR WIFE SEEMS MUCH BETTER THAN BEFORE.

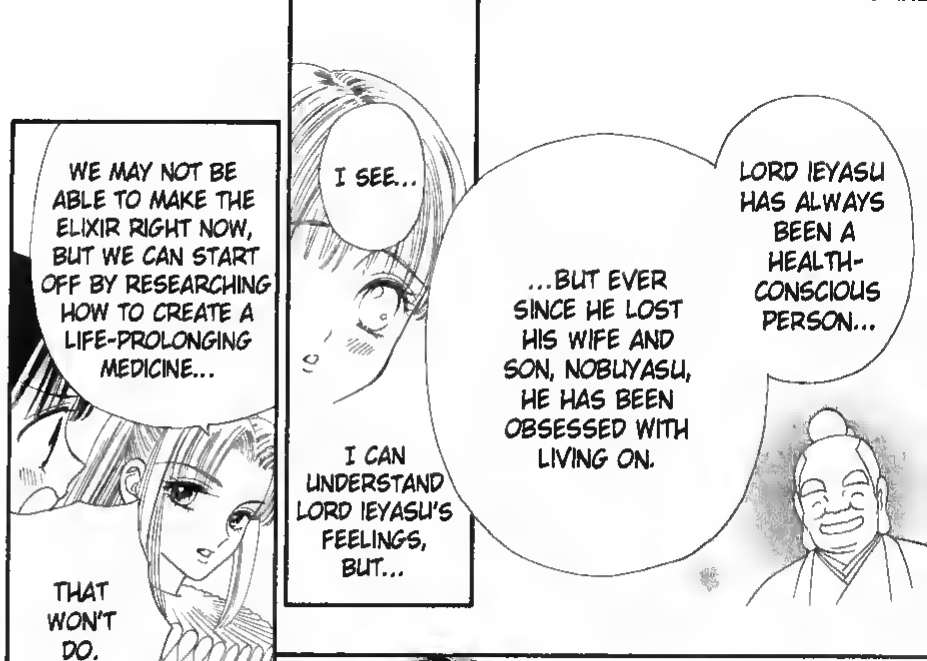
WHEN DID YOU START LEARNING ABOUT MEDICINES, USAGI?
I WANT YOU TO START TAKING THIS MEDICINE STARTING TODAY.
THAT'S GREAT! JUST WATCHING THE FLOWERS IN THE GARDEN WILL HELP YOU FEEL BETTER.


...THE VERY FIRST TIME I STARTED RESEARCHING WAS WHEN MY MOM WAS HAVING A DIFFICULT PREGNANCY.
HOW IS YOUR MOTHER DOING NOW?
OH?
WELL, I'VE OFTEN HAD UPSET STOMACHS EVER SINCE I WAS SMALL, SO I KEPT MEDICINES THAT SUITED ME...
BUT BEFORE THAT...

SQUEEZE
I WANT TO SEE HANZO!!
HANZO!
ZWIK
TMp
TMp

I NEVER SHOULD HAVE SAID I WAS GOING TO STAY.
HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO STUPID?!

I MISS HANZO...
ZZZ
ZZZ


WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE THE ELIXIR RIGHT NOW, BUT WE CAN START OFF BY RESEARCHING HOW TO CREATE A LIFE-PROLONGING MEDICINE...
THAT WON'T DO.
I SEE...
I CAN UNDERSTAND LORD IEYASU'S FEELINGS, BUT...
...BUT EVER SINCE HE LOST HIS WIFE AND SON, NOBUYASU, HE HAS BEEN OBSESSED WITH LIVING ON.
LORD IEYASU HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HEALTH-CONSCIOUS PERSON...

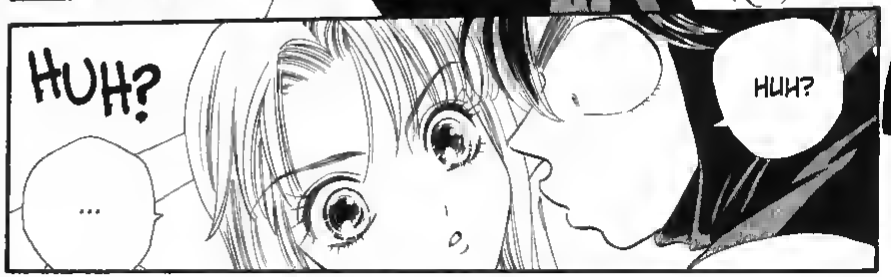
I'M GOING TO MAKE THAT ELIXIR AND RETURN TO IGA!!
I WANT TO GO BACK!!
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO IGA!
TMp
TMp
USAGI...

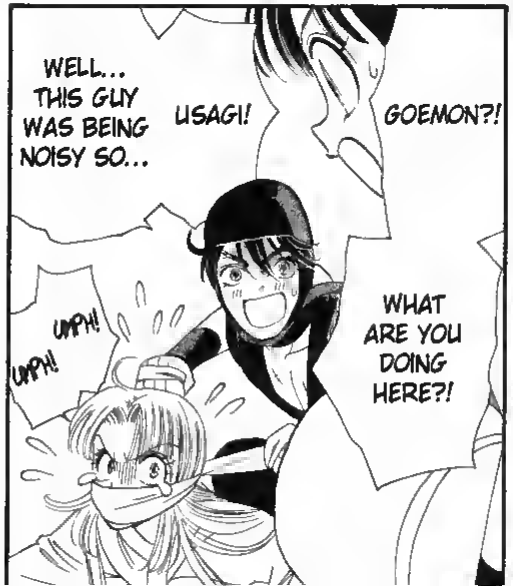
I CAME TO SEE YOU, USAGI.
HUG♡
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SNEAK IN HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TO SEE ME...!
I HAVE A HABIT OF SNEAKING IN.
GRIN
RELAX.
ACTUALLY, HANZO AND MAMEZO ASKED ME TO...
HANZO?!
DID HANZO SAY ANY-THING?!
MAYBE HE'S THINKING ABOUT CALLING ME BACK TO IGA!!

I HUG IT WHEN I GO TO SLEEP. ♡
IT'S MY HANZO COMFORT PILLOW. ♡
OH, LOOK AT THIS!
UM...
...IS HANZO EVER GOING TO COME BY?
HEY...

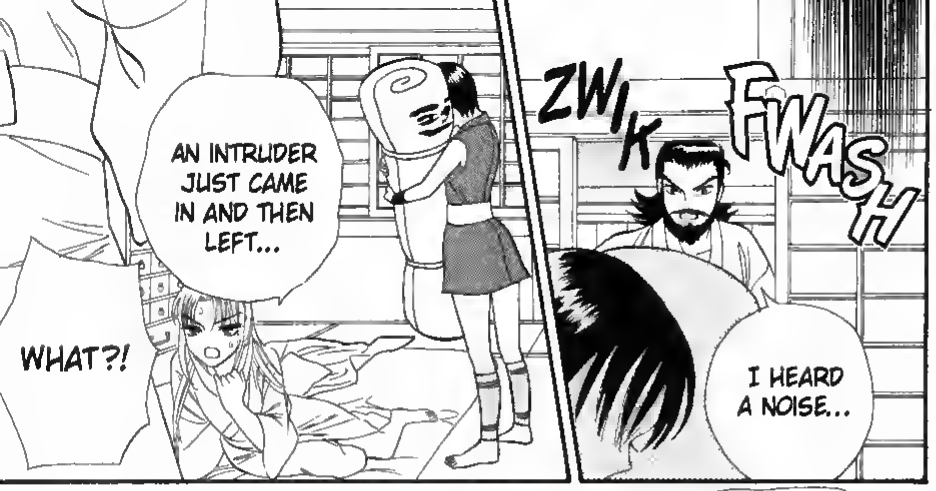
HANZO...
JUST GIVE IT UP.

SHUP
IF YOU DON'T WAKE UP, I'M GOING TO PLAY AROUND WITH YOU. ♪
MMM♡
WAKE UP, USAGI.
HMM?
USAGI.


HUH?
...
HUH?

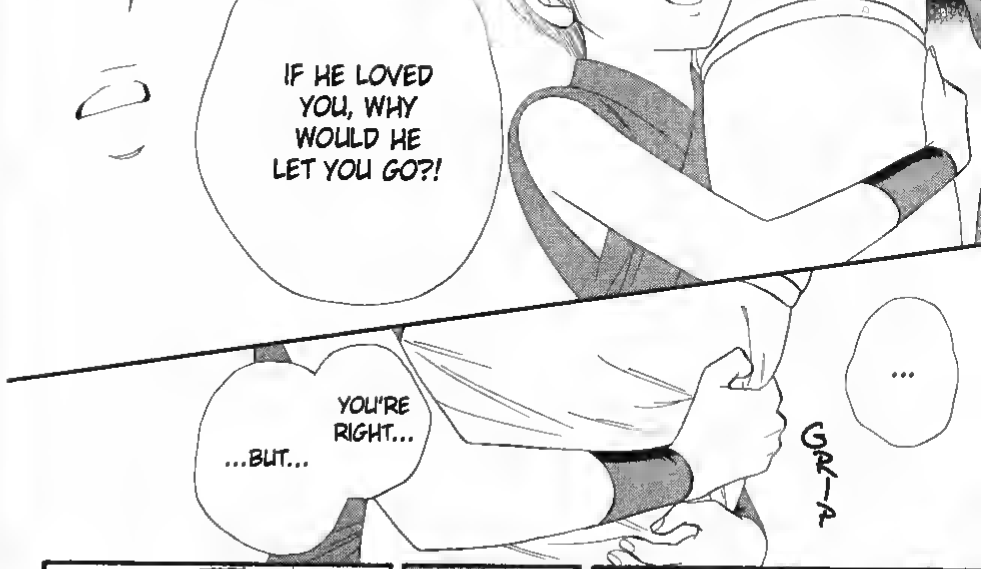

WELL... THIS GUY WAS BEING NOISY SO...
USAGI!
GOEMON?!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
UMPH!
UMPH!

INTRUDER!
HEY...
YOU'RE MAKING TOO MUCH NOISE!
I MADE A MIS-TAKE...
UMPH!


AN INTRUDER JUST CAME IN AND THEN LEFT...
WHAT?!
ZWIK
FWASH
I HEARD A NOISE...

"HE DOESN'T HAVE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST FEELING FOR YOU."
WHAT HAPPENED?!
CAN'T THIS CASTLE GET BETTER SECURITY?!
IT'S JUST LIKE THE TIME MOM DIED...
WHEN THE SADNESS IS TOO OVER-WHELMING, I CAN'T CRY.
THIS FEELING... I'VE FELT THIS BEFORE...

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU LIKE HIM, HE DOESN'T HAVE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST FEELING FOR YOU.
HUH?
IF HE LOVED YOU, WHY WOULD HE LET YOU GO?!


...
YOU'RE RIGHT...
...BUT...
GRIP

I'LL COME AGAIN.
I GOTTA GO.
THAT WAY...
TMP
TMP
TMP
Y-YOU SHOULD JUST MARRY ME, USAGI!

WAKE UP.
AREN'T YOU GOING TO DO RESEARCH FOR THE ELIXIR?
...
I LOVE HANZO.
IF ONLY THERE WAS A MEDICINE THAT CAN CURE HEARTBREAK...
...BUT MY FEELINGS DON'T REACH HIM.
I LOVE HIM WITH ALL MY HEART...
HANZO, LET'S WRITE A LETTER TO HER AGAIN!
RIGHT.
I MUST TELL HER TO ANSWER MY LETTERS QUICKLY!!

JUMP
YEAH.
Y-YEAH, SHE WAS REALLY HAPPY ABOUT IT.
WAS USA SURPRISED TO SEE MY LETTER?
DID YOU SEE USA?
WELCOME BACK, GOEMON!
TMP
TMP
TROMP
TROMP
I'M SO GLAD!!
DID USAGI SEEM TO BE DOING OKAY?
Pooch Pouch by Hanzo

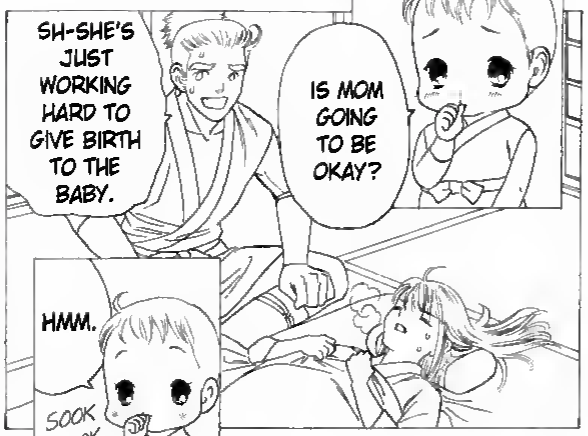
A REPLY FROM HER TO OUR LETTERS!!
WHAT?
WHAT ABOUT HER LETTER?
YEAH.
SHE SAID HI TO ALL OF YOU.

HOW RUDE OF HER...!!
WHAT?!
I DON'T HAVE ONE.
OH...
Y-YOU KNOW, SHE'S VERY SLOW AT ANSWERING LETTERS...

Tail of the Moon

Chapter 17

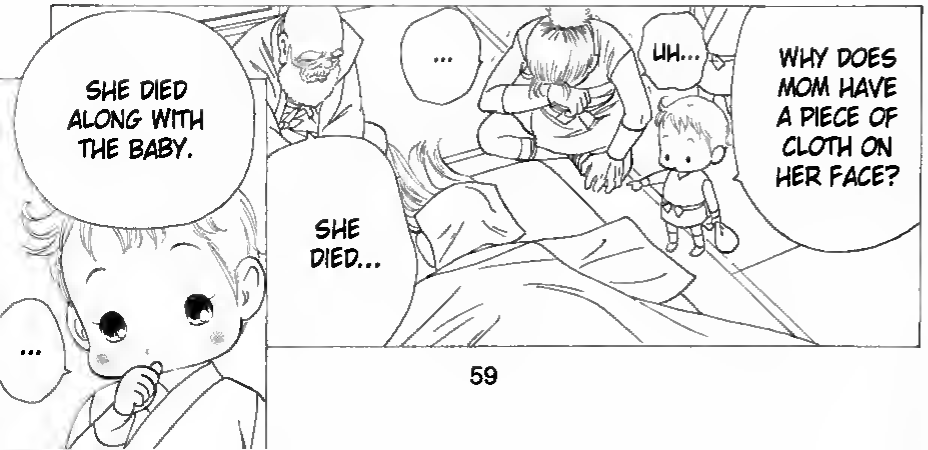
...SHE'S BEEN WORKING HARD FOR THREE DAYS. WHY ISN'T THE BABY COMING OUT?
HEY...


SH-SHE'S JUST WORKING HARD TO GIVE BIRTH TO THE BABY.
IS MOM GOING TO BE OKAY?

HMM.
SOOK SOOK

...I'M GOING TO MAKE MEDICINES FOR MOMMY.
GOEMON...

HUH?
I MADE MEDICINE!!


SHE DIED ALONG WITH THE BABY.
...
SHE DIED...
UH...
WHY DOES MOM HAVE A PIECE OF CLOTH ON HER FACE?
...

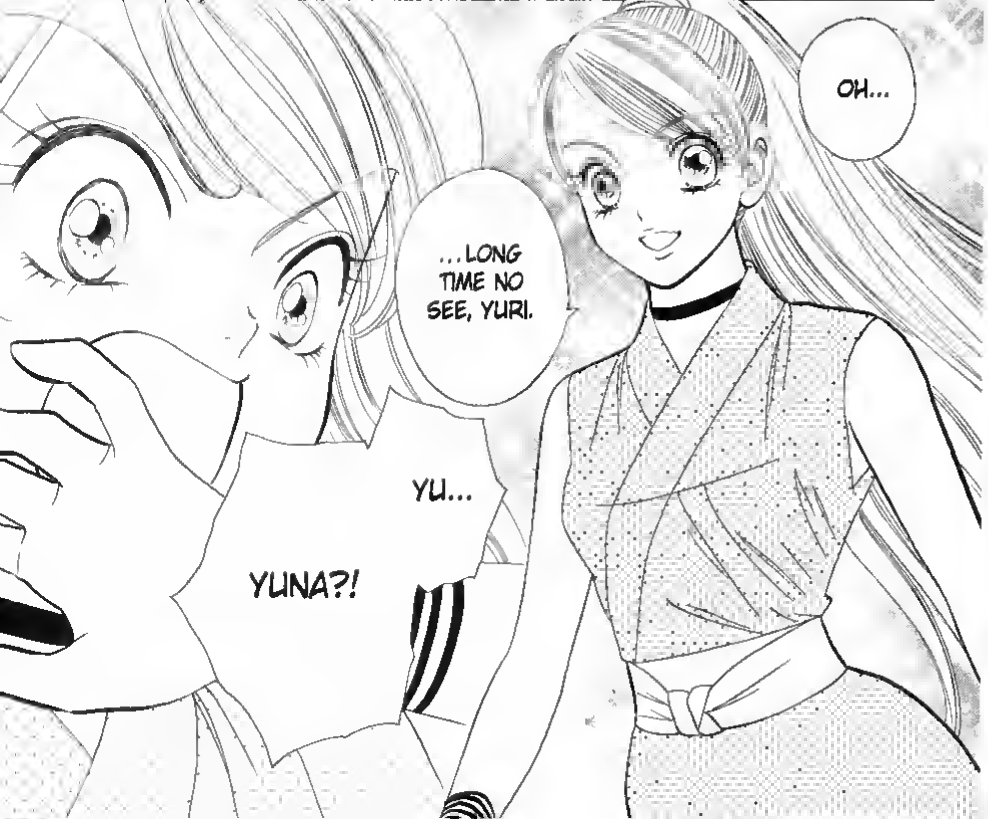
YOU'RE GOING TO BE A BIG SISTER, SO YOU HAVE TO ACT LIKE ONE.
WE WON'T KNOW UNTIL I GIVE BIRTH TO THE BABY.
THE BABY MOVED!
I WONDER IF IT'S GOING TO BE A BROTHER? OR MAYBE A SISTER?
ACT LIKE ONE!!

I SEE THAT YOU'VE BOTH WOKEN UP EARLY TODAY.
TMP
TMP
I'LL TAKE THE STRING OUT OF YOUR FOREHEAD.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE HAD SUCH A SAD DREAM.
RUB RUB
WASH YOUR FACE AND COME OVER HERE.
HUH?!
B-BMP
B-BMP
CLOSE YOUR EYES, WILL YOU. YOU'RE MAKING IT HARD FOR ME.
OKAY, OKAY.
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BEGUN TO OVERCOME YOUR DISLIKE OF WOMEN, YUKIMARU.
I DON'T SEE THIS AS A WOMAN.
"This"?!
I'LL COME DOWN ONCE I REMOVE THE STRING.
S-STOP CONFUSING ME...
MORNING, BEARDED HANZO. ♡

YOUR MOTHER IS DEAD!
DON'T BE MEAN TO HER!
WHY ARE YOU BURYING MOM?
CHUK
CHUK
STOP IT, DADDY!
MOM!
MOM!
DON'T BURY HER!!
MOM!!
What was with the sudden shouting?
YOU SURPRISED ME.
SORRY...
SNIF
OH
A DREAM...

I SHOULD HAVE GONE TO HAMAMATSU WITH GOEMON.
NO!!
SHAKE HANDS!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
TUP
THIS IS WHAT YOU DO!
TUG
SHAKE HANDS!!

YUNA?
TMP
TMP
THIS WAY PLEASE, MISS YUNA.


OH...
...LONG TIME NO SEE, YURI.
YU...
YUNA?!

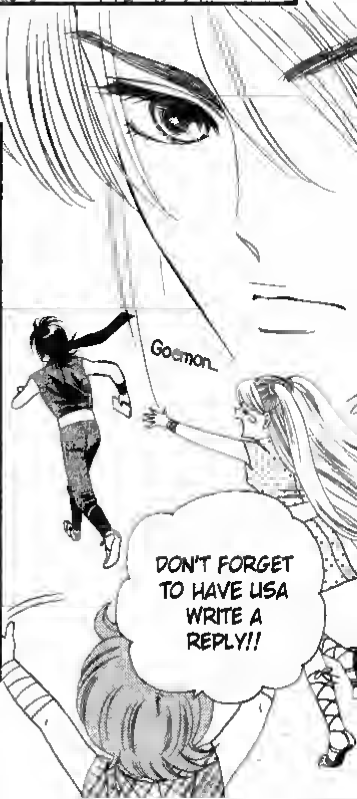
TMP
TMP
IT'S OKAY MAMEZO...
...WE CAN ASK SOMEONE ELSE.

I-IT'S OKAY!
I'LL GO.
VUP

A-AGAIN?
BUT GOEMON CAME BACK FROM HAMAMATSU ONLY YESTERDAY!
I JUST WANT LISA TO WRITE BACK TO ME...
HUH?
GOEMON.
TAKE THIS LETTER TO LISA FOR ME!!

BACKS AWAY
TEACHING IT WHERE TO GO THE BATHROOM, AND TEACHING IT TRICKS LIKE SHAKING YOUR HAND.
UH...
YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE ABLE TO TEACH IT IF YOU KEEP IT IN YOUR POUCH LIKE THAT!!
I-I STILL CAN'T TOUCH DOGS...

BY THE WAY, MAMEZO...
...HOW ARE YOU DOING WITH THE PUPPY TRAINING?
TRAINING?


Goemon
DON'T FORGET TO HAVE LISA WRITE A REPLY!!

M-MASTER HANZO?
...
I'M SORRY, BUT I'M GOING TO GO HOME.
TMP
TMP
MISS YUNA!
WAIT!
THIS WAY!!
THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT!!
WHAT A STUPID DOG!
SHUMP
WHINE

SOB
SOB
SOB
NOTHING...
HUH?
WHAT DID YOU WANT?

I'LL PROVE IT TO YOU. ♪
HANZOU...
THAT'S NOT TRUE! WOMEN LIKE HANZO.
MASTER HANZO JUST ISN'T POPULAR WITH WOMEN...
He wasn't like that before...

...BUT WE REALLY WANT MASTER HANZO TO CHOOSE HIS WIFE...
WE'RE SORRY, YURI...
THESE TWO HERE HAVE BEEN REALLY PERSISTENT ABOUT ME MEETING MASTER HANZO.
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

AND MASTER HANZO, THE MOST HANDSOME MAN IN ALL OF IGA, IS JUST THE KIND OF MAN WHO'D SUIT ME.
YOU... YOU'RE TOO DAZZLING, YUNA.
PLEASE COME THIS WAY, MISS YUNA.

TH-THEN YOU'RE A PROSPECTIVE BRIDE TOO?!
THAT'S RIGHT.
I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR ME TO HAVE A FIANCÉ.

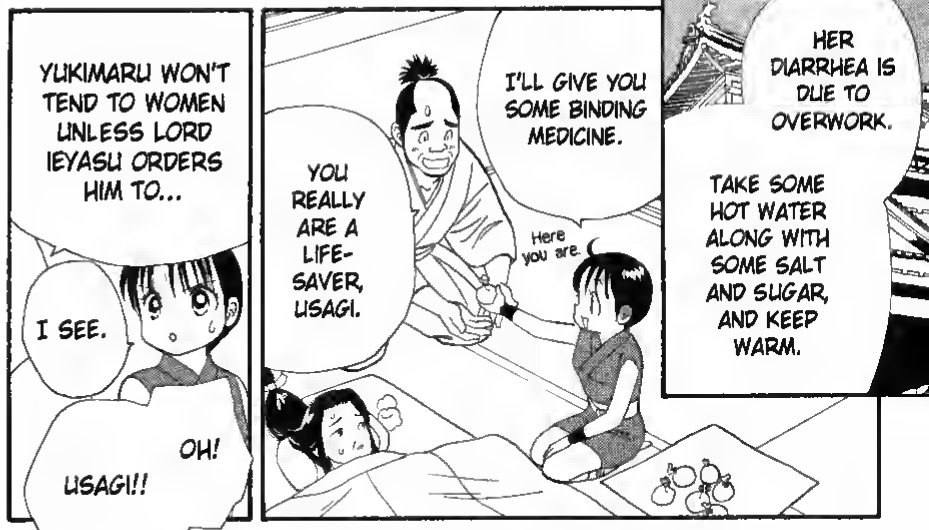
YOU IDIOT!!
EH, MASTER HANZO...?

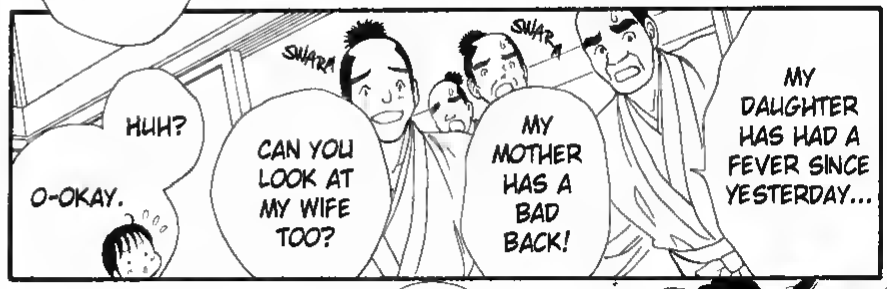
PANT PANT

RIP
RIP
DAMN IT!

TOSS
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU DELUDE USAGI!!

...I COULD DO WITH SOME HELP FROM YOU, YUKI.
HEY...
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING UNLESS MY LORD ORDERS ME TO.
THERE ARE TONS OF ILL WOMEN.


YUKIMARU WON'T TEND TO WOMEN UNLESS LORD IEYASU ORDERS HIM TO...
I SEE.
OH!
USAGI!!
I'LL GIVE YOU SOME BINDING MEDICINE.
YOU REALLY ARE A LIFE-SAVER, USAGI.
Here you are.
HER DIARRHEA IS DUE TO OVERWORK.
TAKE SOME HOT WATER ALONG WITH SOME SALT AND SUGAR, AND KEEP WARM.

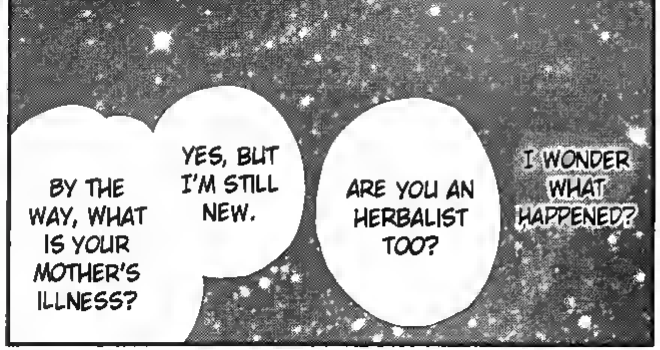

HUH?
O-OKAY.
SWARA
CAN YOU LOOK AT MY WIFE TOO?
SWARA
MY MOTHER HAS A BAD BACK!
MY DAUGHTER HAS HAD A FEVER SINCE YESTERDAY...

THEY ALL SEEM TO BE VERY HAPPY.
I NEVER KNEW THERE WERE SO MANY WOMEN WHO SUFFER...
USAGI, PLEASE COME WITH ME NEXT!
TH-THERE'S MORE?!
ME TOO!
You've got mumps
USAGI, PLEASE EXAMINE MY WIFE TOO!

OH!
YUKI...
SHAKE
TUG
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
TONK
I BROUGHT YUKIMARU!!
NOW'S THE CHANCE TO TAKE HIM!
O-OKAY.
SORRY...
YUKI, YOUR LIP IS BLEEDING!!
FAINT

TMP TMP
WHY DO I HAVE TO DO ALL THE--
YUKIMARU, ARE YOU THERE?!
W-WELL...
...YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT...
DON'T YOU FIND IT BETTER TO BE BUSY SO THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO FEEL BLUE?
YOU'RE SO SELFISH, YUKI!!
JUST OVERCOME YOUR DISLIKE OF WOMEN!!
Sip
HUH?
YUKI'S MOM?!
YOUR BROTHER CAME DOWN FROM OKAZAKI WITH NEWS THAT YOUR MOTHER IS GRAVELY ILL!
I'VE ALREADY GOTTEN PERMISSION FROM LORD IEYASU, SO GO AT ONCE!!
YOUR MOTHER'S ILL, YUKI. YOU'VE GOT TO GO!
YUKI-MARU ...!?
I'M NOT GOING.

Stories About My Research Trip #2
When I got to the Iga-ryu Ninja Museum, located in Ueno-Castle Park, I was greeted by a pretty kunoichi and a handsome ninja!! At first sight, the house looked like a thatched-roof farmhouse, but that was the ninja house!!
I went inside with about 10 other tourists, and watched the pretty kunoichi demonstrate secret revolving doors, secret rooms, rope ladders, secret passages, and so forth.
SPIN
OOH!
This is the secret revolving door
The ninja house was built extremely rationally and skillfully, and I was able to come up with many ideas just by looking around.
...I'll try my best to do so
I haven't been able to incorporate these gimmicks into the manga yet, but...


BY THE WAY, WHAT IS YOUR MOTHER'S ILLNESS?
YES, BUT I'M STILL NEW.
ARE YOU AN HERBALIST TOO?
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED?

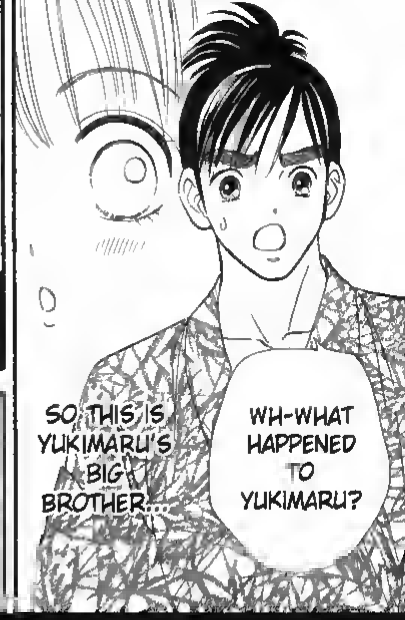
IF SHE'S THE MOTHER OF THESE TWO, THEN...
B-BABY?!
SHE'S HAVING DIFFICULTY DELIVERING THE BABY, AND WE WERE TOLD BY A NEARBY HERBALIST THAT SHE WON'T MAKE IT...

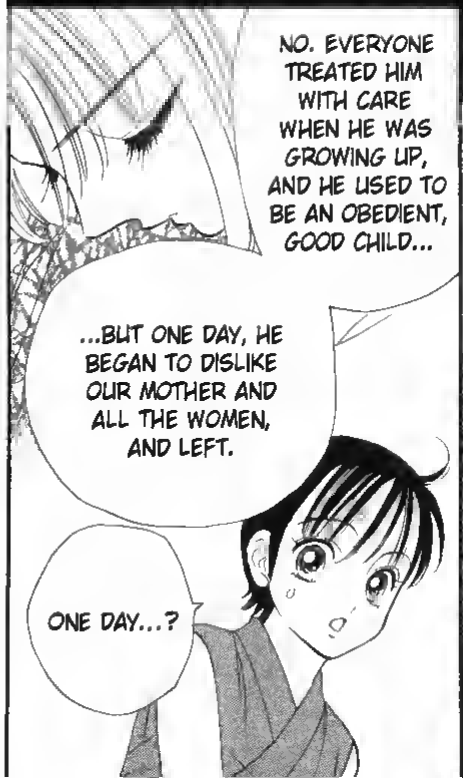
LET'S HURRY!!
SHE'S GOT TO BE PRETTY OLD TO BE HAVING A BABY!!

OKAZAKI CASTLE TOWN
WE HAVE WORK HERE?

FLOP
R-RIGHT.
HE ONLY FAINTED. YOU CAN JUST TAKE HIM.
THEY DON'T LOOK ALIKE AT ALL.

OKAY!
USAGI, NO MATTER HOW MUCH YUKIMARU PROTESTS, YOU MUST DELIVER HIM TO HIS MOTHER!!


SO THIS IS YUKIMARU'S BIG BROTHER...
WH-WHAT HAPPENED TO YUKIMARU?


NO. EVERYONE TREATED HIM WITH CARE WHEN HE WAS GROWING UP, AND HE USED TO BE AN OBEDIENT, GOOD CHILD...
...BUT ONE DAY, HE BEGAN TO DISLIKE OUR MOTHER AND ALL THE WOMEN, AND LEFT.
ONE DAY...?

RAI...
MY NAME IS RAIMARU.
YOU'RE YUKI'S BROTHER...
...HAS YUKI BEEN AFRAID OF WOMEN HIS WHOLE LIFE?
TMP
TMP
TMP

ALL THE WOMEN ARE ATTRACTED TO MASTER HANZO!!
WHY?
BE-CAUSE.
TAKE YOUR HAND OFF MY SHOULDER.
SHUP
I'M SO GLAD. YOU'RE POPULAR WITH WOMEN, MASTER HANZO!!

HA HA HA! ♡
...WE DIDN'T COME TO PLAY.
HANZOU...
LONG TIME NO SEE, HANZOU! ♡
A LOT OF MY FAVORITE GIRLS ARE THERE. ♡
OKAY, LET'S GO TO THAT PLACE.

YOU'D NEVER COME TO A PLACE LIKE THIS UNLESS WE TRICKED YOU INTO IT, MASTER HANZO...
SO YOU TWO ARE IN THIS TOO?!
"A NINJA'S SECRET OUTING."
KIDDING ...
KRAK
UH?
YEAH! ♡
...WE CAME TO PLAY. ♡
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...
YOU SHOULD LET OFF SOME STEAM AND GET RID OF THAT FROWN ON YOUR FACE. ♪
WHAT?!

HURRY UP AND TELL ME WHAT THIS ASSIGNMENT IS.
OKAY, OKAY.
I'LL TELL YOU ONCE WE GET TO THE INN. ♪
I CANNOT COME UP WITH A PLAN UNLESS YOU TELL ME EARLY ON.
He's hand-some ♡

OW!
SHOVE
WHAT DID I DO?!
SO THIS SHOP KICKS THEIR CUSTOMERS OUT?
GET OUT!
WE DON'T WANT DRUNKARDS IN THE SHOP!!
YOU'RE ANNOYING THE OTHER CUSTOMERS!!
DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD HELP HER?
How cruel!
DON'T. IF HE REMEMBERS OUR FACE, WE'LL HAVE TROUBLE WORKING OUTSIDE.

MASTER HANZO...
TROMP TROMP
...STOP FIGHTING.
THERE, THERE...

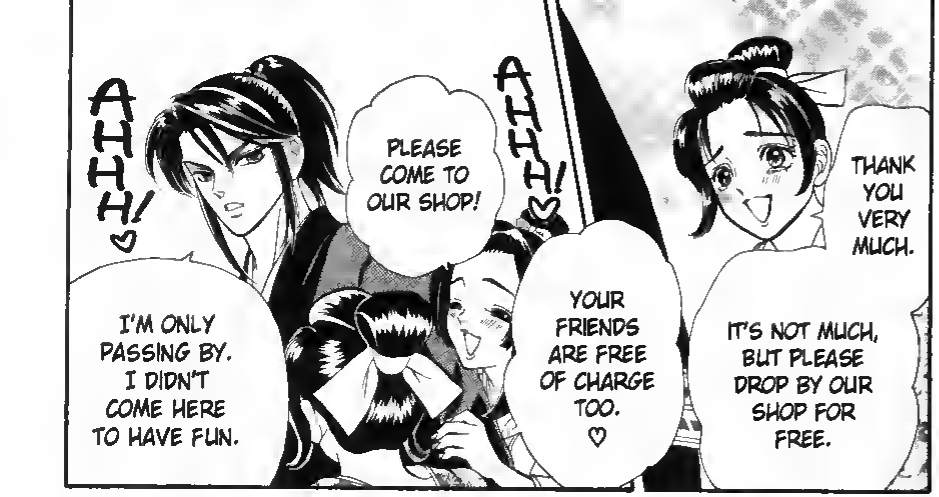
EEEEEK
I'M GONNA KILL YOU!!
SHUT UP!
LET HER GO.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

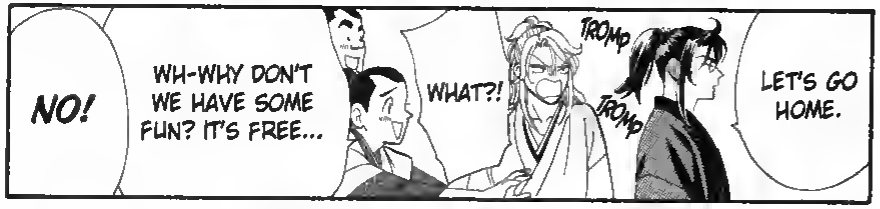
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I HATE THE MOST IN THIS WORLD?

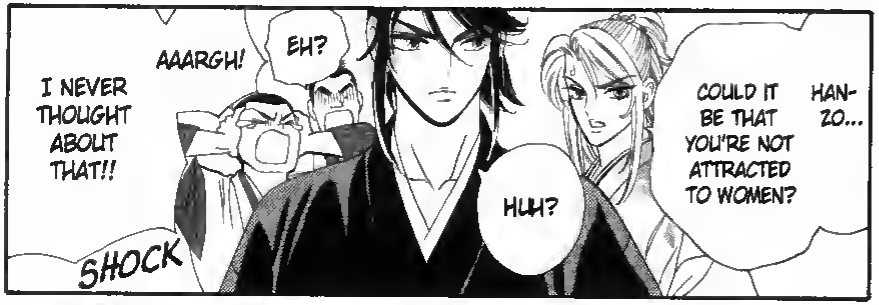
HOLD ON! WE'VE COME THIS FAR, SO LET'S HAVE SOME FUN.
WE'RE SORRY, MASTER HANZO!!
TROMP TROMP
IDIOTS AND STUPID JOKES!!
I'M GOING HOME!
BUT...
YOU'RE GOING TO BE A FATHER SOON, HANZOU!
HAVE SOME FUN?

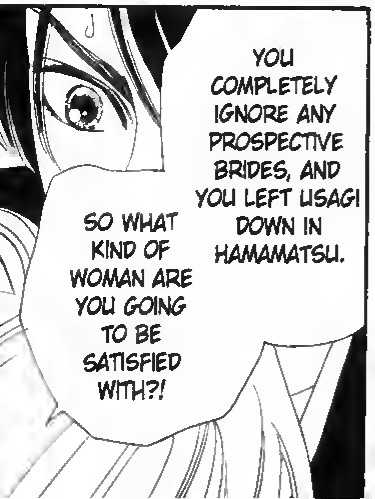
HOW?
RIGHT?
I-IT'S A NATURAL INSTINCT FOR MEN! YOU'VE GOT IT TOO, HAVEN'T YOU, HANZO?!
I DON'T!!
I'M GOING TO BEAT ALL THE SINISTER DESIRES OUT OF YOUR HEAD, ONCE AND FOR ALL!!
NO BUTS!!
ZAA ZAA
P-PLEASE STOP ATTRACTING ATTENTION...

BUT SARA WON'T CARE FOR ME SINCE SHE'S GOT PREGNANT...
GRR


AIIH♡
PLEASE COME TO OUR SHOP!
AIIH♡
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
I'M ONLY PASSING BY. I DIDN'T COME HERE TO HAVE FUN.
YOUR FRIENDS ARE FREE OF CHARGE TOO. ♡
IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT PLEASE DROP BY OUR SHOP FOR FREE.


NO!
WH-WHY DON'T WE HAVE SOME FUN? IT'S FREE...
WHAT?!
TROMP
TROMP
LET'S GO HOME.


AAARGH!
EH?
I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT THAT!!
SHOCK
HUH?
COULD IT BE THAT YOU'RE NOT ATTRACTED TO WOMEN?
HAN-ZO...

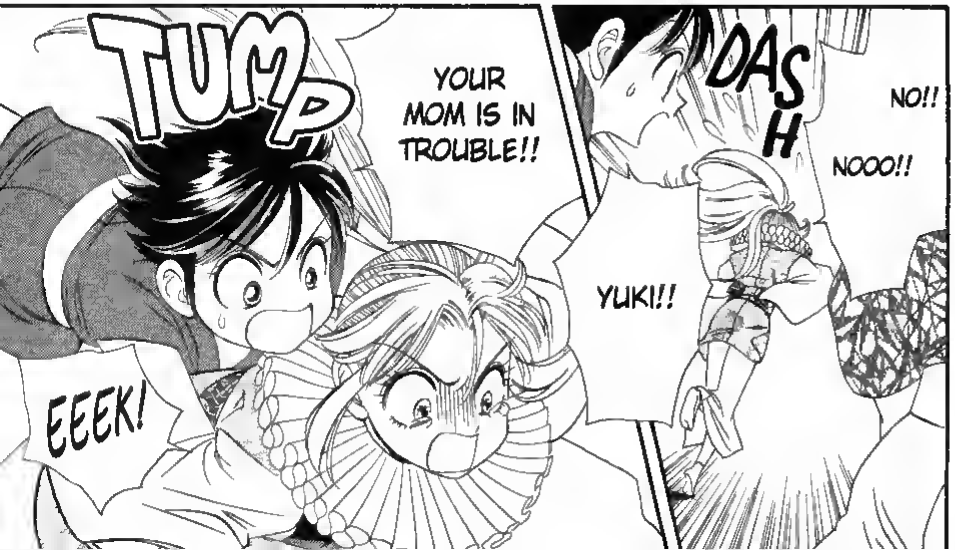

SO WHAT KIND OF WOMAN ARE YOU GOING TO BE SATISFIED WITH?!
YOU COMPLETELY IGNORE ANY PROSPECTIVE BRIDES, AND YOU LEFT USAGI DOWN IN HAMAMATSU.

HANZOU, YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME...
BUT THINK ABOUT IT!

YOU IDIOTS!!
I feel so sorry for the Elder!!
WAAAH
IF MASTER HANZO IS THAT KIND OF PERSON, THEN WE'LL NEVER HAVE AN HEIR!!

GRAB
VOOSH
KRX
AARGH!
THUD
HE BEAT THAT GUY SO EASILY!
WH-WHAT JUST HAPPENED?!
YOU'RE SO COOL, MASTER HANZO!
AMAZING!

WHAT'S A BROTHEL?
HMM...
UH...
WE RUN A BROTHEL.
THIS IS YUKI'S HOUSE?
YUKI-MARU...
ACK!
WH-WHAT?! WHAT AM I DOING HERE?!


TUMD
YOUR MOM IS IN TROUBLE!!
EEEK!
DASH
NO!!
NOOO!!
YUKI!!

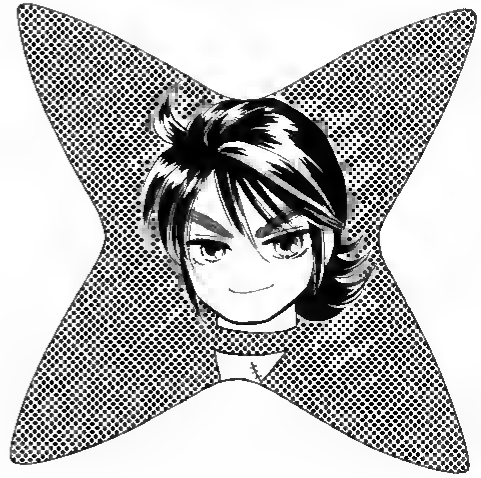
HEY!! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE SARA-- SHE'S MINE!!
Then stop flirting around.
I KNOW THAT.
A STRONG AND INTELLIGENT WOMAN...

I...
...WILL WED A STRONG AND INTELLIGENT WOMAN WHO WILL BE ABLE TO REVIVE IGA WITH ME.
I ADMIT I USED TO THINK THAT THE PRINCESS WAS THE IDEAL PERSON TO HAVE AS MY WIFE...
...BUT I'VE BEGUN TO THINK DIFFERENTLY THESE DAYS...
OOOH!

SHAKE SHAKE
WAAARGH
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?!
LET ME GO!
IT'S A LONG STORY.
VUP
HANZO!
TEARY
DASH
TUMP
OW!
YOU CAN'T GO!!

U...
USAGI?!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU GO!!
NO WAY!
WAAH
NOOO! I'M GOING BACK TO THE CASTLE!!
WAAH
EH?
THAT VOICE...
IS IT REALLY YOU, USAGI?
HANZO!
!!

HANZO'S TRIVIA
OLIVIER'S BEAKED WHALE HAS 15 STOMACHS.
OINK OINK♡
(Translation) We're wearing the same clothes!♡
Tail of the Moon
Chapter 18



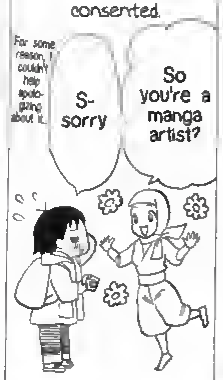
SHAKE SHAKE
LET ME GO!
A...
...LONG STORY?
OH!
I WON'T!!
YOU'RE USELESS! GET OUT OF HERE!!
AAARGH!
STOMP
I'M HUNGRY TOO...
I DON'T KNOW THE WAY BACK TO IGA, AND I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.
YOUNG GIRL, YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE FOOD YOU WANT! ♡
SMILE
REALLY?!
NOOOO!!
HEY MISTER, DO YOU WANT TO BUY ME?
BUT IN RETURN, YOU'RE GOING TO WORK ALL YOUR LIFE IN THIS BROTHEL!!

MAMEZO'S MANY FACES ♪
WHEN AM I GOING TO GET MY EGG?
SOY SAUCE
TWEET♪
TOOT
TOOT

WAARGH!
I'm starving! I'm going to die!
IF YOU CAN'T GET CUSTOMERS, THEN YOU WON'T GET ANY FOOD!!
OH NO...!!
THUMP
I'M SORRY, USAGI!!
OH, USAGI?
URGH
IT'S ALL MY FAULT FOR LEAVING YOU BEHIND IN HAMAMATSU!
YUKI'S MOTHER IS IN TROUBLE!!
HUH?
HANZO...
OH...
...YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME CARRY YUKI!!
Y-YUKI?
URRRRGH!

Stories About My Research Trip #3

I began taking pictures while the pretty kunoichi was performing for us, being careful about not getting in the way of the other tourists. And when I asked her if I could take photographs of the various details within the house to use as source material for the background of my manga, she willingly consented.

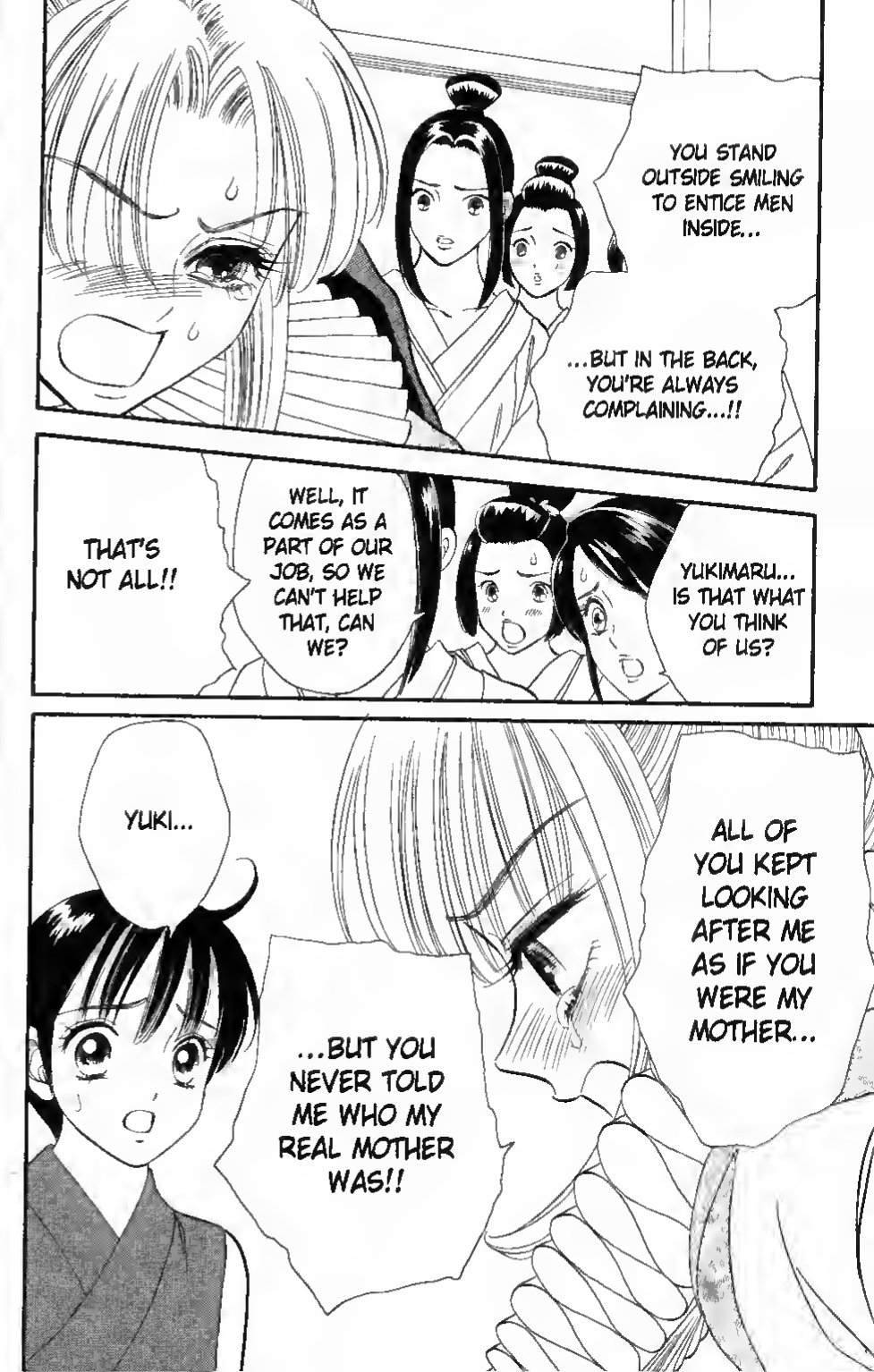


Thanks to the kind guidance of the pretty kunoichi, I was able to shoot pictures to my heart's content. Hanzo's residence has been largely based on the ninja house in the Iga-ryu Ninja Museum. If you're interested, please pay them a visit! ♡

YUKI...
I-I'M NEVER GOING TO TREAT HER!!
TH-THIS IS OUT OF MY HANDS.
YUKI, YOU'VE GOT TO TREAT HER!!
NO!!
IT'S THE SAME AS WHAT HAPPENED TO MY MOM...
USAGI?
SH-SHUT UP, YOU LIARS!!
I DIDN'T RAISE YOU TO BE SUCH A CHILD!
HOW COULD YOU?!
YUKI-MARU ...
IT-IT'S BECAUSE OF ALL THE WOMEN HERE THAT I DON'T LIKE WOMEN ANYWAY!!
YUKI, WE DON'T HAVE TIME--

WHAT A LARGE STOMACH!
THE BABY'S GROWN TOO BIG. IT WON'T COME OUT NO MATTER HOW HARD SHE TRIES.
YOU SURE ARE NOISY.
WAARGH!
WAARGH!
I'VE BROUGHT YUKIMARU AND THE HERBALIST FROM HAMAMATSU.
WELL DONE, RAIMARU.
CLASP
TMP
HER PULSE IS WEAK...
AND SHE'S REALLY FATIGUED...
HOW IS SHE, USAGI?

SLAP
OW!
WOMEN ARE DOUBLE-TONGUED AND IRRITATING, AND THAT'S WHY I HATE THEM!
...YOU HIT ME!
YOU...
USAGI?!
AN HERBALIST WHO DOESN'T CARE FOR PEOPLE IN PAIN IS JUST PLAIN MEAN!!
WELL, I HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU TOO!


YOU STAND OUTSIDE SMILING TO ENTICE MEN INSIDE...
...BUT IN THE BACK, YOU'RE ALWAYS COMPLAINING...!!
THAT'S NOT ALL!!
WELL, IT COMES AS A PART OF OUR JOB, SO WE CAN'T HELP THAT, CAN WE?
YUKIMARU... IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK OF US?
YUKI...
...BUT YOU NEVER TOLD ME WHO MY REAL MOTHER WAS!!
ALL OF YOU KEPT LOOKING AFTER ME AS IF YOU WERE MY MOTHER...

YOUR MOTHER, USAGI?
CAN YOU DO IT, YUKI?
I-I ONLY WATCHED MASTER PEDRO...
...SO I CAN'T...
MY MOM HAD DIFFICULTY GIVING BIRTH LIKE THIS, AND SHE DIED ALONG WITH THE BABY...
huff
huff
THE BABY SURVIVED...
...BUT THE MOTHER DIDN'T.
OF COURSE THAT'LL HAPPEN IF YOU CUT HER OPEN!
BUT IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING, THEY'RE BOTH GOING TO DIE.

PLEASE DO IT... YUKIMARU.
huff
huff
SAVE THE... BABY!!
DON'T WORRY... ABOUT ME...
MOTHER CHIYO!

ANYTHING SHE TAKES SHE THROWS UP.
I'LL GIVE HER A FAST-ACTING REVITALIZER, AND THEN SHE CAN TRY TO PUSH AGAIN...
...
USAGI...
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN DO THIS?!
FORGET IT! I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING MYSELF!!
HMPH!

B-BUT THAT'S THE ONLY WAY...
WHAT?!

CUT HER OPEN?!
HUH?
THE ONLY WAY IS TO CUT HER AND TAKE THE BABY OUT.
...I SAW MASTER PEDRO CUT OPEN A WOMAN IN TROUBLE TO TAKE THE BABY OUT...
IT WAS JUST ONCE BUT...
BUT IF YOU DO THAT, THEN MOTHER CHIYO WILL...

We'll help too!
HERE'S THE HOT WATER!
HERE'S THE FIREPAN!
DASH DASH
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE BLOOD, GET OUT OF THE ROOM!
CLOSE THE WINDOWS!

OKAY.
GET MOTHER CHIYO TO BITE THAT CLOTH.
IT TAKES EFFECT EVEN IF YOU INHALE IT.
I DISSOLVED PAIN KILLER IN WATER.
USAGI, WHAT'S THAT?

MOTHER CHIYO...
...I'M GOING TO SAVE YOU BOTH, SO HANG IN THERE!
HANZO, YOU HOLD HER HAND!
R-RIGHT.
BUDDHA, PLEASE PROTECT CHIYO AND HER BABY...

...PLEASE BRING IT HERE...
I NEED A FIREPAN AND HOT WATER...
HELP THE BABY!!
PLEASE, YUKI!!
huff huff
THE BABY...

I'M NOT GOING TO TRY AND RUN AWAY ANYMORE!!
LET ME GO!!
A fire-pan?
O-OKAY!!
AND SOME ALCOHOL FOR STERILIZATION!!

YOU'RE GOING TO DO IT, YUKI?
WHO'S GOING TO DO IT IF I DON'T?
YOU HELP TOO.
OKAY!

DON'T DIE!
MOM!!
USAGI?
DON'T DIE...!!
DON'T LEAVE ME!!
THUD
Hey!
Oooh!
THROW HIM OUTSIDE.
SHUP
O-OKAY...
HOLD THIS!

GRIP
MRNNNPH!
MRNMPH!
COME ON!!
YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE!
CHIYO!!
HANG ON!
DON'T DIE...!
...
MOM...

THE BABY IS ALREADY DEAD...
FORGET IT.
FWOO
FWOO
huff
huff
SLAP
!!
SLAP
STOP IT!! THE BABY IS DEAD!
USAGI!
SLAP
URG

OH NO...
...THE BABY ISN'T BREATHING...
IT'S A BREECH BABY TOO...
WHAT A LARGE BABY!
SHLUP
USAGI! THE BABY'S OUT!
HUH?
DASH
!!
LET ME TRY!!
HUUH
DON'T DIE!
I'M GOING TO STITCH HER WOUND UP, SO WIPE THE BLOOD!!
UH...
UH...
RIGHT!
FWOO
PLEASE!
FWOO
FWOO

A NEW-BORN BABY...
I'M SORRY I HAD TO SLAP YOU...
I'M GLAD YOU WERE ABLE TO COME OUT INTO THE WORLD.
WELL DONE, USAGI.

WAARGH!
THE BABY CRIED!!
WAARGH!
I'M SO GLAD.
THE BABY IS OUT!
NEEARGH!
A NEW LIFE...
...CRYING SO POWERFULLY...
THE BABY IS CRYING...
WAARGH!

YOUR WORK TODAY WAS WONDERFUL.
INDEED, I AM IMPRESSED.

...NOT WORTHY OF RECEIVING ANY COMPLIMENTS FROM YOU, HANZO.
I'M...

WHY?
I'M A BAD PERSON.

WAAH! WAARGH!
M-ME?!
I'M GOING TO WASH THE BLOOD OFF MYSELF.
HERE, WIPE OFF THE BABY...
HANZO...
I'M VERY IMPRESSED.

TROMP
TROMP
YOU KNOW...
...YOU NEVER FAIL TO SURPRISE ME, USAGI.
DON'T CATCH COLD.
SPOOSH SPOOSH

A BABY WHO NEVER WAS ABLE TO COME OUT INTO THIS WORLD...
I NEVER FELT SAD ABOUT IT...
I WAS GOING TO BE THE BABY'S SISTER, BUT...
...I JUST KEPT THINKING IT WAS THE BABY'S FAULT!!

...TOGETHER WITH THE BABY...
WHEN MY MOM DIED...
A BAD PERSON?
ALL THIS TIME...
I THOUGHT IT WAS THE BABY'S FAULT THAT MY MOTHER WENT THROUGH SO MUCH PAIN...
...I'VE BEEN BLAMING THAT BABY.

HANNO...
I AM SURE THAT YOUR MOTHER AND THE BABY ARE PROUD OF YOU IN HEAVEN...
YOU ARE A MUCH STRONGER AND WISER WOMAN THAN I TOOK YOU FOR, USAGI.

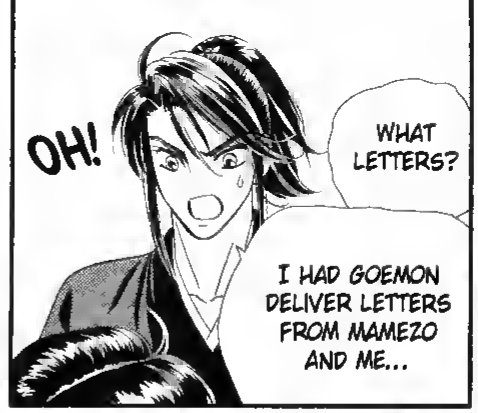
IT'S OKAY.
YOU DID FINE, USAGI.

MANZO'S TRIVIA
THE SMALL CRAB FOUND INSIDE SHELLFISH IS CALLED A "PEA CRAB."
Tail of the Moon
Chapter 19

DON'T.
WHY?
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP
IF YOU TREAT ME THIS KINDLY...
USAGI?
...THEN I...
...WON'T BE ABLE TO GIVE UP MY HOPES...
"HE DOESN'T HAVE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST FEELING FOR YOU."
SOB
YOU'VE ALREADY GIVEN UP ON ME, HANZO...
SOB

SUFF
"YOU ARE A MUCH STRONGER AND WISER WOMAN THAN I TOOK YOU FOR, USAGI."
THE SCAR ON YOUR FORE-HEAD...
...HAS COMPLETELY HEALED.
TH-THUMP

R-REALLY?
I NEVER LIE.
I...
...DON'T HAVE TO GIVE UP ON YOU...?
WOULD YOU GIVE UP IF I TOLD YOU TO?
NO!
I WON'T!!
JUMP


OH!
WHAT LETTERS?
I HAD GOEMON DELIVER LETTERS FROM MAMEZO AND ME...

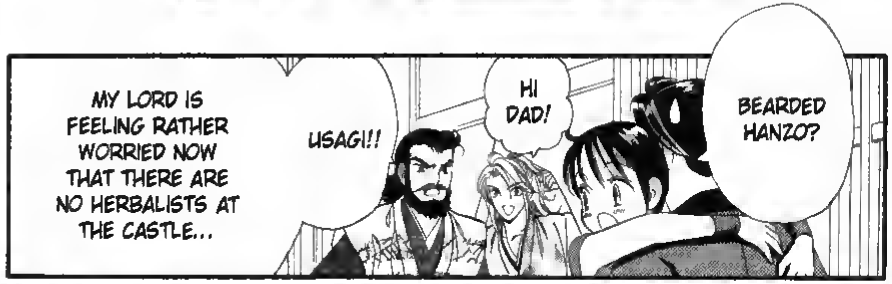
LETTERS...?
DIDN'T YOU READ MY LETTERS?
SO I CAN'T--

I SHOULD HAVE ASKED SOMEBODY ELSE TO DELIVER THEM.
SORRY...

YOU WROTE A LETTER TO ME, HANZO?
I WILL GET PERMISSION FROM LORD IEYASU...
...AND HAVE YOU RETURNED TO IGA, USAGI.

I'LL GO.
USAGI...
DASH
MY HORSE IS OVER THERE.
OH, WAIT A MINUTE!
DASH
HANZO!
DO YOU MIND IF I HUG YOU ONE LAST TIME?
WHAT?!
GRIN
HERE?!
SMILE SMILE
...

STUCK♡
Sh-she won't get off me...
USAGI IS RIGHT HERE!
EH?
UM...
Oh my...
SOMEBODY FROM HAMAMATSU HAS COME TO PICK YOU UP.
TMP
TMP
HE...
...HE'S CALLING FOR YOU.
WHERE ARE YOU?
GLOMP
TMP
TMP
USAGI!


MY LORD IS FEELING RATHER WORRIED NOW THAT THERE ARE NO HERBALISTS AT THE CASTLE...
USAGI!!
HI DAD!
BEARDED HANZO?

R-RIGHT.

ONE OF US...
SO I NEED ONE OF YOU TO RETURN TO HAMAMATSU IMMEDIATELY.
YUP
IT MAY BE BETTER TO HAVE YUKIMARU BY MOTHER CHIYO'S SIDE UNTIL SHE FEELS BETTER..

I WANT TO BE WITH HANZO AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BUT...

HANZO'S WARM...
I WANT TO BE IN HIS ARMS FOREVER...
STRIVE HARD AND STAY OUT OF TROUBLE UNTIL I COME FOR YOU.
...AND COMFORTABLE ARMS...
THANKS.
I'M FINE NOW.
I WON'T CRY.

COME HERE.
HUG

YEAH.
HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
EXPECTED REPLY
HANZO... YOU'VE CHANGED, YOU KNOW?
ME?
MASTER HANZO, LET'S GO BACK TO IGA.
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I REALLY WANT TO SEE MY WIFE AND BABY. ♡
I WANT TO TAKE CARE OF MY PREGNANT WIFE! ♡
OH, OUR BELOVED WIVES...
ME TOO!
I WANT TO HUG SARA TOO!!

I'LL DO MY BEST!
I'VE GOT NO REASON TO CRY.
...THAT I CAN KEEP MY CHIN UP.
YOU REALLY...
...WANTED TO TAKE HER BACK WITH YOU TO IGA, RIGHT?
HANZO HAS GIVEN ME SO MUCH ENERGY...

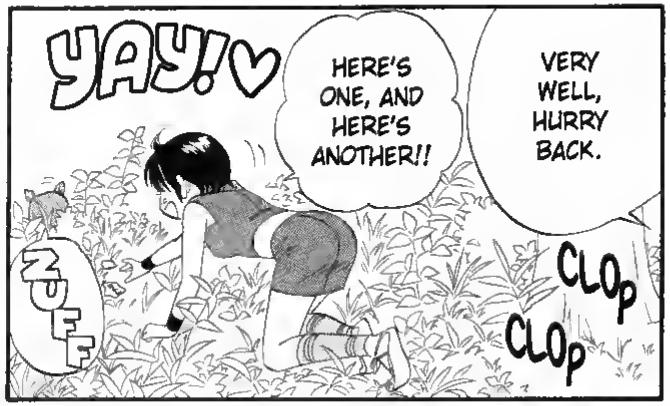
Stories About My Research Trip #4

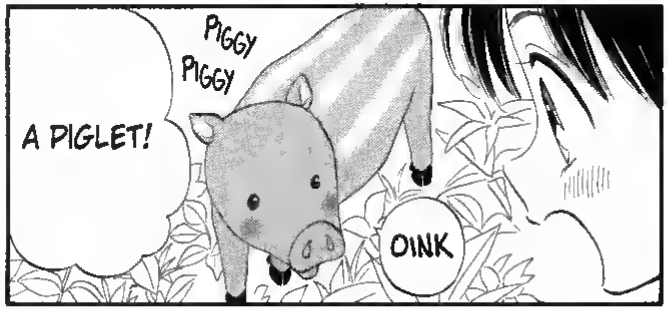
After I looked at many ninja tools and ninja stars in the Ninjutsu Hall located right next to the ninja house, I dropped by the Ninja Tradition Hall where they scientifically prove "ninjutsu," which was a very enlightening experience.

I bought a bunch of books, ninja swords, ninja stars, and straw sandals to use as source material for the manga. And just as I left the shop, the ninja master was performing his ninja star and double-sickle techniques, which was very exciting to see.

When I told the young ninja master that I was here to do research,

Sorry, ninja master. It's this kind of ninja manga.





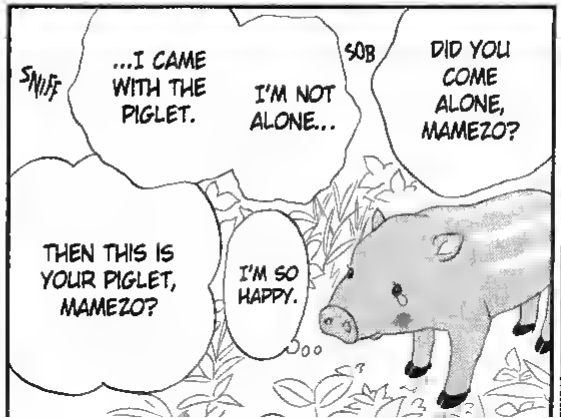
WHAT? A PIECE OF PAPER...
CLOP
!!
BEARDED HANZO, LET ME DOWN!!
...IT'S HANZO'S WRITING!!
USA
THIS WRITING...
I'LL GO BACK TO THE CASTLE ONCE I COLLECT THEM, SO PLEASE GO AHEAD OF ME!
OH, HERE'S ANOTHER ONE!!
IT'S THE FRAGMENTS FROM THE LETTER HANZO SENT ME...
WHAT'S THE MATTER?

WHAT?
W-WELL, I ACTUALLY HAVEN'T READ THE LETTER YET!!
SOB
SOB
...BUT YOU DIDN'T WRITE BACK. I WAS SO WORRIED...
I WROTE A LETTER TO YOU...

HOW COULD GOEMON BE SO MEAN?
WAAARGH
GOEMON SEEMS TO HAVE RIPPED IT APART AND THROWN IT AWAY. I WAS JUST COLLECTING THE PIECES OF IT RIGHT NOW.

I KNEW IT! IT FOLLOWED ME!!
AAAAARGH!!
YIP YIP
WHAT DID?
OH, A PUPPY.
PANT
PANT
I'M GOING TO COLLECT THE PIECES TOO!!
OOF
YAP

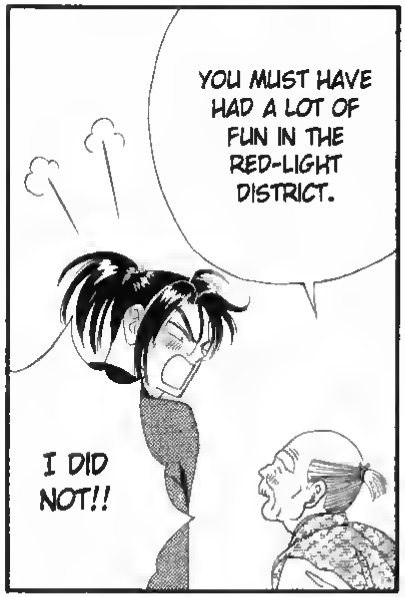
USA...
MAMEZO?!
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
MAMEZO!
I MISSED YOU SO MUCH!!
HUG
USA!


SNIFF
...I CAME WITH THE PIGLET.
I'M NOT ALONE...
SOB
DID YOU COME ALONE, MAMEZO?
THEN THIS IS YOUR PIGLET, MAMEZO?
I'M SO HAPPY.

THOK
WOAH, IT'S HEAVY!
WAAARGH!

...MAMEZO LEFT THIS NOTE, AND DISAPPEARED.
WELL...
DID ANYTHING HAPPEN WHILE I WAS AWAY?
WELCOME BACK, MASTER HANZO.

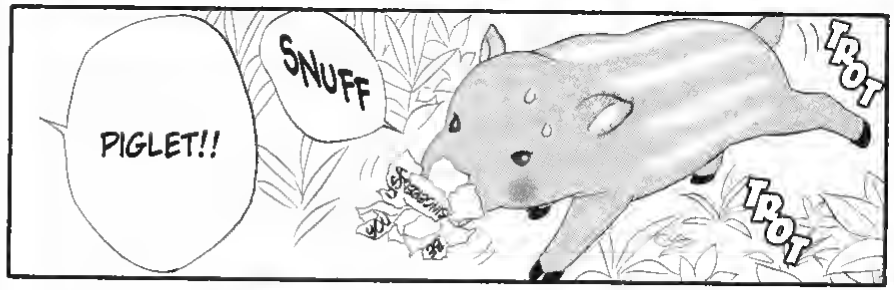
I'M ASSUMING THAT HE WENT TO SEE USAGI.
I CAN'T READ IT!!


YOU MUST HAVE HAD A LOT OF FUN IN THE RED-LIGHT DISTRICT.
I DID NOT!!

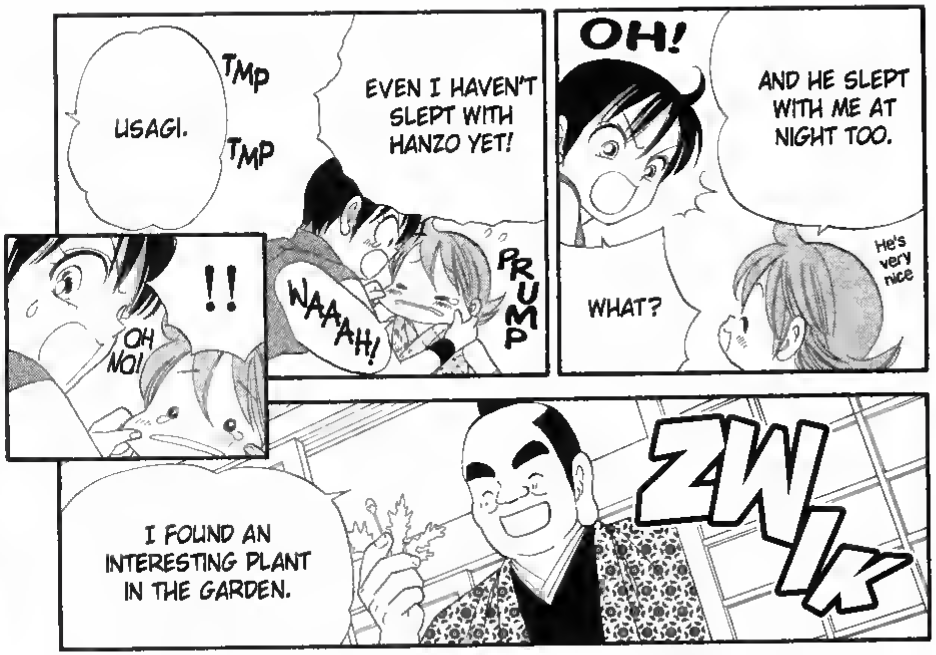
HEH
OH MY, MASTER HANZO...
...YOU LOOK A LOT BETTER THAN BEFORE.
IT'S MAMEZO. I'M SURE WE HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

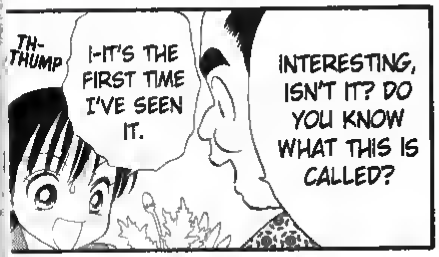
IT'S GOING TO BE CONFUSING TO HAVE THE SAME NAME, SO WHY DON'T WE CALL IT USAMARU?
HANZO TOLD ME TO TAKE CARE OF IT INSTEAD OF YOU. BUT I JUST CAN'T...
SNUFF
SNUFF
NIP
NIP
SOB
SOB

IT'S USA, A PUPPY HANZO GAVE ME.
DO YOU KNOW THIS PUPPY?
WOOO
"USA"?


PIGLET!!
SNUFF
TROT
TROT

TH-THIS PIGLET MAY BE ABLE TO BECOME A NINJA PIG...
BUT THEN AGAIN, THIS PUPPY FOLLOWED YOU ALL THE WAY FROM IGA, AND THAT'S PRETTY AMAZING TOO.
WOW!
THE PIGLET COLLECTED SO MANY!
PHOOT
FLUTTER


USAGI.
TMP
TMP
EVEN I HAVEN'T SLEPT WITH HANZO YET!
!!
OH NO!
WAAAH!
PRUMP
OH!
AND HE SLEPT WITH ME AT NIGHT TOO.
He's very nice
WHAT?
I FOUND AN INTERESTING PLANT IN THE GARDEN.
ZWIK


TH-THUMP
I-IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN IT.
INTERESTING, ISN'T IT? DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS CALLED?

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR ELIXIR MAKING. I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO IT!
I'LL ASK YUKI WHEN HE COMES BACK.
TMP
TMP

TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP
HUH?
WHAT IS THIS ANIMAL-LIKE SCENT I SMELL?
WOW!
THAT IS AN INTERESTING PLANT!
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP

GOEMON'S SO MEAN...
POUT POUT
MAYBE HERE?
I KNOW.

EH?
WHERE DOES THIS GO?

I'M IMPRESSED THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO WRITE A LETTER, MAMEZO.
HEE!
...AND WE EACH WROTE A LETTER.
HANZO TAUGHT ME HOW TO WRITE...

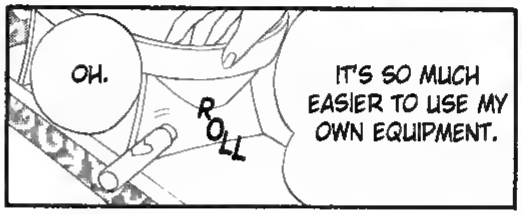
BUT...
...AS I LAY OUT THE LETTER PIECE BY PIECE...
...I CAN UNDERSTAND HANZO'S FEELINGS FOR ME BIT BY BIT, SO I'M REALLY HAPPY.
USA
HOW A
LEFT
YOU
BE
AS A

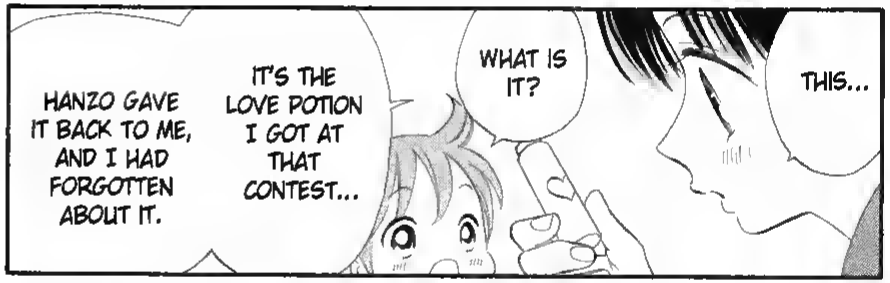
TREMBLE TREMBLE
Y-YUKI!!
WHY IS THERE A WILD BEAST AND A FAIRY IN MY ROOM?
PLEASE...
...DON'T TELL LORD IEYASU ABOUT HIM!!
I'm not a fairy!
MAMEZO AND THE PIGLET ARE REALLY NICE!
Zzz
HUH.
OKAY.
IF YOU SAY SO...
THANK YOU, YUKI!!

YOU'RE BACK EARLY. HOW IS YOUR MOTHER DOING?
SHE MIRACULOUSLY MADE IT THROUGH.
The baby is fine too.
I ASKED ONE OF THE FOREIGN HERBALISTS I KNOW TO TAKE CARE OF HER...
I'M SO GLAD.
IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, USAGI.

SHUP
OH, I BROUGHT YOUR MEDICINE EQUIPMENT, USA.
THANKS.

AHHH. I CAN GO BACK WHENEVER I WANT TO IF I CAN MAKE THAT ELIXIR...
THAT WAS CLOSE.
TMP


OH.
ROLL
IT'S SO MUCH EASIER TO USE MY OWN EQUIPMENT.


HANZO GAVE IT BACK TO ME, AND I HAD FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT.
IT'S THE LOVE POTION I GOT AT THAT CONTEST...
WHAT IS IT?
THIS...

ZWIK
IT MUST BE AN AMAZING POTION.
AAARGH!
MAYBE THE PERSON WHO MADE THIS WOULD KNOW ABOUT THE ELIXIR...
I KNOW!!

ARGH!
EEEEK!
GOEMON!!
Y-YOU AGAIN!!
GRRR
TOMP
HOW DARE YOU RIP UP HANZO'S LETTER!
YOU RIPPED UP MY LETTER TOO!
TAKE THIS, AND THIS!!
TOMP
I'M SORRY!
I CAME TO APOLOGIZE ABOUT IT!!
ON
OKAY. ♡
TICKLE
TICKLE
HEE HEE
SO FORGIVE ME, OKAY?
YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD BOY, MAMEZO!
GOOD BOY!!
HEY!
RWAR
RWAR
BY THE WAY, MAMEZO ...
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
IT'S MY JOB TO PROTECT USA!

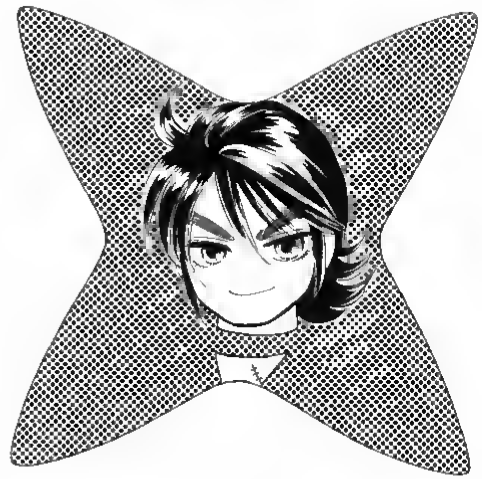
I-I DON'T HAVE ONE!!
B-BMP
DO YOU HAVE A FEVER?
YUKI...
...AND YOU CALLED ME BY MY NAME FOR THE FIRST TIME TOO.
BUT YOU'RE SO GENTLE ALL OF A SUDDEN...
USAGI! ♪
BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE WITH ME...
...I WAS ABLE TO SAVE BOTH OF THEM...
POP
AAAH!
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?

TMP TMP
WAIT! GOEMON!
LIFT
USA!
AAAH!
AAAHH!
USAGI!
WOOSH

LOVE POTION?
GOEMON.
DO YOU KNOW WHO MADE THIS LOVE POTION?
AH, THAT?
THE HERMIT OF IGA.
WHO IS THAT?
THE HERMIT OF IGA?
A LEGENDARY HERBALIST WHO LIVES ON THE TOP OF THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN IGA.
HE'S AN UNBELIEVABLY OLD MAN. HE'S MORE THAN 200 YEARS OLD.
...
SIGH
I SHOULD HAVE NEVER ASKED YOU, GOEMON.
YOU THINK I'M LYING, DON'T YOU, USAGI?
VUP
THEN I'LL TAKE YOU TO HIM!
And you lie all the time, Goemon.
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE THAT SUCH AN OLD MAN EXISTS.

Tail of the Moon™

Chapter 20

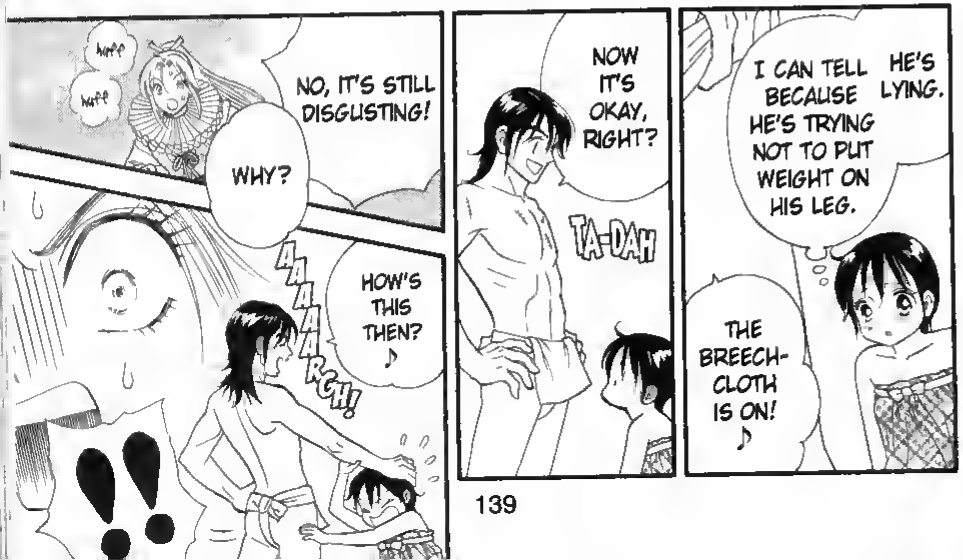


A LEGENDARY HERBALIST, HUH...
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I HEARD ABOUT IT.
...BUT THAT IS WHAT HE SAID BEFORE TAKING USAGI AWAY.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT IS TRUE OR NOT...
A HERMIT IN IGA?
YES, MY LORD!!
GO AFTER THEM AS FAST AS YOU CAN AND MEET THAT HERMIT!!
I HAVE A HUNCH ABOUT THIS ONE!
IT'LL BE FINE.
YOU'VE JUST SENT BOTH HERBALISTS OUT...
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
TMP
TMP
...HAVE YOU MET THIS HERMIT BEFORE, GOEMON?
HEY...
TMP
OF COURSE NOT.
THIS TIME, USAGI AND YUKIMARU ARE GOING TO SUCCEED AND COME BACK WITH THE ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH!
TMP
TMP

AAAARGH!
WOOSH
JUMP
WAIT FOR ME!
M-ME TOO!
HUH?
...
DASH
TMP

GET THAT UGLY THING AWAY FROM ME!
Right, Mamezo?
UGLY?
HAIRY.
EVERYBODY COMPLIMENTS ME ON IT.
Back off!
WHY DON'T YOU ASK MASTER TANBA ABOUT THE HERMIT FOR STARTERS?
AARGH!
WHERE IS MY BREECH-CLOTH?

I JUST SLIPPED ON THE ROCK, SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
NO.
HUH?
DOES YOUR LEG HURT?
GOEMON...


NO, IT'S STILL DISGUSTING!
WHY?
HOW'S THIS THEN? ♪
AAAARGH!
NOW IT'S OKAY, RIGHT?
TA-DAH
I CAN TELL BECAUSE HE'S TRYING NOT TO PUT WEIGHT ON HIS LEG.
HE'S LYING.
THE BREECH-CLOTH IS ON! ♪

PONK PONK
YARGH!
STOP THAT!
SO IT IS A LIE AFTER ALL!
TMP
WHAT?
I HEARD ABOUT HIM FROM THE MASTER WHEN I WAS STILL A KID.
TMP
URGH...
ZZZT
SHUK
AAAH!
USA!
EEEK!
SPOOSH

GEEZ!
YOU KNOW, MASTER TANBA DOES SAY SOMETHING RELIABLE EVERY FOUR YEARS OR SO.
IF IT'S GREAT-GRANDPA'S STORY, THEN I REALLY CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!
WRING

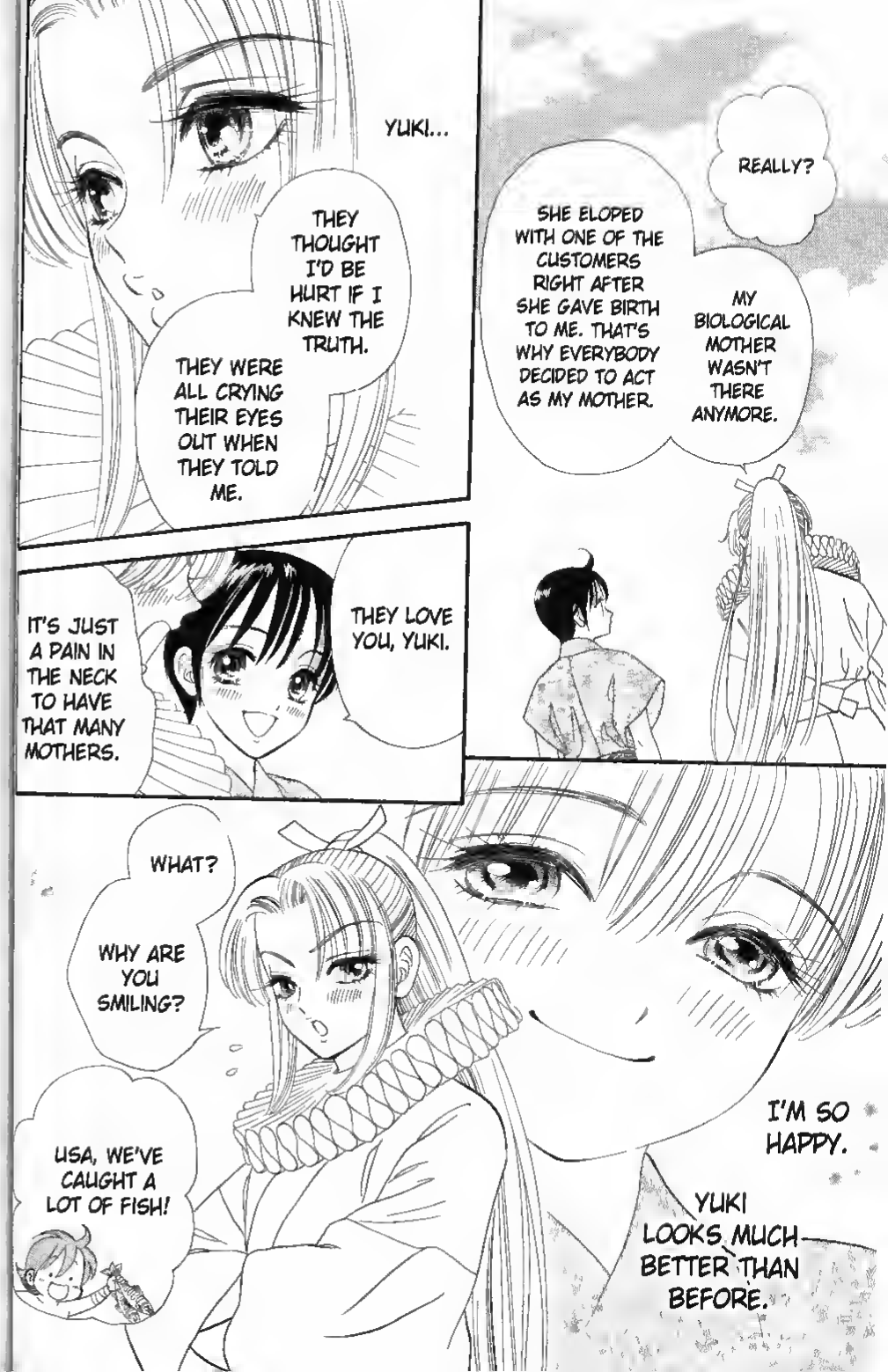
LOOM
I SEE YOU'RE ACTUALLY A MAN TOO.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
HEY, SENIOR HERBALIST ...
I'VE NEVER CAUGHT A COLD BEFORE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF YOU CATCH COLD?
EH?
THAT GUY LIKES USAGI...
WHAT'S SO COOL ABOUT A WEIRDO WHO LOOKS AND TALKS LIKE A GIRL?
MRRR
NOT AT ALL...
BLUSH
YUKI WAS SO COOL WHEN HE PERFORMED THE OPERATION.
OF COURSE HE IS.
HUH.
L-LOOK WHO'S TALKING! YOU'RE A NINJA, BUT YOU'VE GOT SCARS ALL OVER YOUR BODY!
HMPH
IT ONLY SHOWS THAT I NEVER TURN MY BACK TO THE ENEMY!!
SWIP
I DON'T HAVE ANY SCARS ON MY BACK.
WHAT?
H-HEY, THERE'S A SCAR RIGHT HERE!!
UH ..

TH-THAT WAS CLOSE...
GASP
HEY...
GASP
...ARE YOU COMING WITH US TO MEET THE HERMIT TOO?
WE FELL IN THE RIVER.
YUKI!
SPASH
GET AWAY FROM USAGI!!
Y-YOU PERVERT!
SPASH
YOU TOLD LORD IEYASU ABOUT IT?
OH?
huff huff
I'VE GOTTEN LORD IEYASU'S APPROVAL TOO!
OF COURSE!
PUT THIS ON!
THANKS.
SHUP
IT'S NOT A HOAX...
WHAT AM I GOING TO SAY TO LORD IEYASU WHEN GREAT-GRANDPA'S STORY TURNS OUT TO BE A HOAX?
U-USAGI!!
!!

WHEN I WAS SMALL...
...I TIPPED OVER THE PAN IN THE IRORI, AND HE COVERED ME TO PROTECT ME FROM THE BOILING WATER.
WHAT IS THAT GUY TO YOU, ANYWAY, USAGI?
HE'S BEEN MY PROTECTOR...
...EVER SINCE I WAS BORN.
HE'S PROTECTED ME...
GOEMON'S ALWAYS PROTECTED ME WITH HIS LIFE.
AND EVER SINCE DAD DIED...
GOEMON'S BEEN A FATHER TO ME TOO.
I...
I WAS TOLD WHO MY REAL MOTHER WAS.

IT'S A BURN MARK!
OH...
OH, THIS?
I GOT THIS WHEN I ACCIDENTALLY WAS SPLASHED WITH BOILING WATER.
BUT A SCAR IS A SCAR, RIGHT?
THAT BURN MARK...
Mamezo, over there!
SPOOSH
...WAS MY FAULT.
GOEMON!
I'LL CATCH THEM FOR YOU.
THERE'S LOTS OF FISHES!
DON'T YOU RUN AWAY.
HURRAY!

NO, IT'LL PROBABLY HAVE NO EFFECT ON HER.
MAYBE I'LL GIVE THE LOVE POTION TO USAGI...
HMM...
HMPH
IT'S DELICIOUS!
I'VE NEVER EATEN FISH IN SUCH A BARBARIC WAY.
THERE'S SO MUCH SMOKE!
WHY IS A NEWCOMER LIKE HIM ON SUCH GOOD TERMS WITH USAGI?
THE MUSHROOMS ARE READY.
OINK
OINK
PANT
PANT
HERE YOU ARE, SENIOR HERBALIST, TRY IT. ♡
I'LL GIVE THE LOVE POTION TO THIS GUY, SO HE'LL FALL IN LOVE WITH ME INSTEAD OF USAGI! ♪
PLIP PLIP
BAM
VOOSH
I TOLD YOU SO. ♡
IT'S GOOD.
MM!!
CHOMP
EAT IT.
THANK YOU...


YUKI...
THEY THOUGHT I'D BE HURT IF I KNEW THE TRUTH.
THEY WERE ALL CRYING THEIR EYES OUT WHEN THEY TOLD ME.
REALLY?
SHE ELOPED WITH ONE OF THE CUSTOMERS RIGHT AFTER SHE GAVE BIRTH TO ME. THAT'S WHY EVERYBODY DECIDED TO ACT AS MY MOTHER.
MY BIOLOGICAL MOTHER WASN'T THERE ANYMORE.
IT'S JUST A PAIN IN THE NECK TO HAVE THAT MANY MOTHERS.
THEY LOVE YOU, YUKI.
WHAT?
WHY ARE YOU SMILING?
USA, WE'VE CAUGHT A LOT OF FISH!
I'M SO HAPPY.
YUKI LOOKS MUCH BETTER THAN BEFORE.

SKRTCH SKRTCH
NO!
BUT... THIS IS A NICE SIGHT TOO.
HELP ME!
SMOOCH SMOOCH
I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU!
SMOOCH
SMOOCH
Y-YUKI?!
USA!
I GAVE HIM THE LOVE POTION, SO WHY DIDN'T HE FALL IN LOVE WITH ME?!
SP
LASH
WOAH!
YEEAH!
WHAT WAS I DOING?!
WHA...
OH!
KOFF
KOFF
I GOT SOME WATER UP MY NOSE...
LOVE POTION?!
EH...I WAS JUST TESTING TO SEE IF THAT LOVE POTION REALLY WORKS.
MAYBE THAT LOVE POTION FORCES THE PERSON WHO TOOK IT TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THE ONE NEAREST TO THEM?
Okay, stand back.
KOFF
EH...
WHAT...?
USA!

SHOOT!
MAYBE IT WAS DEADLY OR SOME-THING?!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
OH MY, YOUR BODY IS SO HOT!
THUD
OOOH!!
YUKI?!
HUH?
♪
WHAT?
I... I WANT...
huff
huff
I'LL GET WATER...
NO!!
I WANT YOU, USAGI.
SMOOCH

Stories About My Research Trip #5
The people at the Iga-ryu Ninja Museum were really very helpful. It's a great place, so I recommend that everybody go there and experience it themselves.
Extra
I left the museum and opened my mother's homemade lunch at Ueno-Castle Park, and discovered it had only one white riceball and one dried-sardine in it!! Shocking!
Is this all I get?!
Me?
I should have at least got some seaweed around my rice-ball!
I bet my mother will be angry when she reads this
Who am I talking to here?
Oh. But I'm always greeted by a feast when I go back home, so I've got no hard feelings...
Thank you very much for your letters. I read every one of them. It's a big encouragement for me.
Send your messages and letters to
Rinko Ueda
C/O Tail of the Moon Editor
PO Box 11010
San Francisco, CA 94107
See you in volume 4!
Rinko Ueda
BLINDFOLD ME!!
OKAY.
I'LL HOLD YOUR HAND.
...IF YOU NEVER LEAVE IGA.
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
THAT'S A PAIN.
OH, THAT ONE WAS BOOBY-TRAPPED THIS MONTH.
GOEMON, AREN'T WE CROSSING A DIFFERENT BRIDGE?
AM I...
...GOING TO GET BACK TO HAMAMATSU ALIVE?
HMM.
I HEARD THEY CAUGHT SEVEN PEOPLE WITH THAT TRAP LAST MONTH.

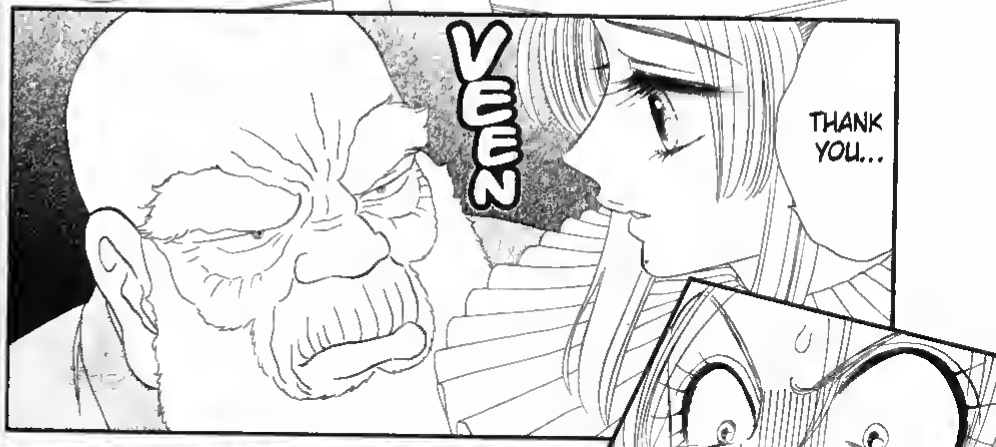
WHAAARGH
DON'T WORRY, I DON'T MIND.
OH!
SORRY, SORRY.
HEY, GOEMON, APOLOGIZE TO HIM!
I WANT TO DIE!
I'LL TRY IT ON USAGI NEXT TIME. ♪
THEN IT WAS THE LOVE POTION THAT MADE YUKI...
I-I'M SORRY!
I DID SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS TO YOU...
TWO DAYS LATER
HANG IN THERE, YUKI.
WE'RE ALMOST TO IGA.
WE CAN'T LET OUTSIDERS DISCOVER THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE VILLAGE.
IS THERE SUCH A RULE?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE BLINDFOLDED...
I WON'T TELL ANYBODY...!
...FOR YOU TO BE BLINDFOLDED.
GRK
HUH?
WHY?!
MY LEG HURTS...
STAGGER
OKAY...
...I THINK IT'S TIME...

I'm ashamed.
HAVE YOU BEEN KICKED OUT OF HAMAMATSU TOO?
NO, I CAME BACK BECAUSE I'VE BEEN ORDERED BY LORD IEYASU TO CREATE AN ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH!
THERE YOU ARE, MASTER.
THIS IS YUKI, MY SENIOR HERBALIST IN HAMAMATSU.
B-BMP
N-NICE TO MEET YOU.
I'M SORRY HE SCARED YOU.
HE LOOKS LIKE A MONSTER BUT HE'S ACTUALLY MY GREAT-GRANDPA.
I'M MOMOCHI TANBA.

SO WHERE DOES THE HERMIT WHO MADE THIS LOVE POTION LIVE?
ETERNAL YOUTH?

KLAK
I'M THE ONE WHO TOLD GOEMON.
GOEMON!
I DON'T KNOW.
I DIDN'T LIE TO YOU. I REALLY DID HEAR IT FROM HIM.
HUH?
WHO ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

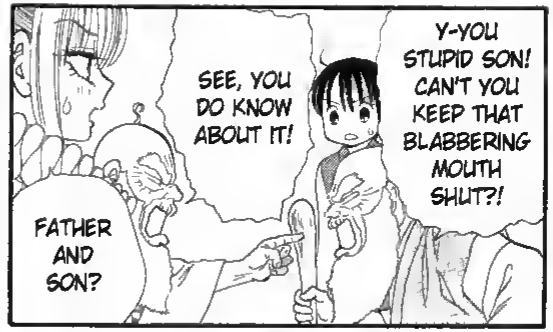
TUG
WHEN CAN I TAKE THE BLINDFOLD OFF?
WAIT RIGHT THERE, YUKI.
UMM...
EH?
SUFF
OH...
I'M HOME!
HUH? WHERE ARE YOU, GREAT-GRANDPA?


VEEZ
THANK YOU...

HEY, GREAT-GRANDPA!
WHAT HAPPENED, YUKI?
WHO ARE YOU CALLING A MONSTER?!
OH!
SLUMP
AAARGH!
A MONSTER!

YOUR FATHER DIED CLIMBING UP THAT MOUNTAIN, USAGI.
MURDERER?
EVERYONE WHO HAS TRIED TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN TO MEET HIM HAS DIED!
DON'T EVER...
...THINK ABOUT GOING TO MEET THE HERMIT.
BUT...MY FATHER WAS ATTACKED BY A BEAR...
THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT...
ON THE MOUNTAIN OF DEATH!

SANDAYU!!
Another monster...
WOAH!
THAT'S RIGHT.
TEETER
OH...
...THAT WAS YOU, GRAMPS?!


FATHER AND SON?
SEE, YOU DO KNOW ABOUT IT!
Y-YOU STUPID SON! CAN'T YOU KEEP THAT BLABBERING MOUTH SHUT?!

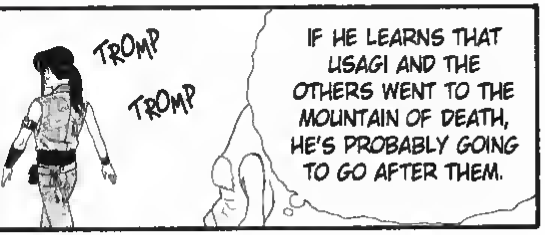
YOU MUSTN'T GO!!
SO THERE REALLY IS A HERMIT...
WHY?
BECAUSE THAT RECLUSE IS AN EVIL MURDERER!

THIS IS HIS FIRST APPEARANCE. USAGI'S GRANDFATHER, MOMOCHI SANDAYU.
GRANDPA!
I CAN STILL RECALL IT AS IF IT WERE YESTERDAY. MY FATHER SCOLDED ME FOR TRYING TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN TO MEET THE HERMIT...

THAT'S MY GRAND-DAUGHTER!
IF A BEAR COMES OUT...
...I-I'LL USE THIS WEAPON TO BEAT IT.
WHAT?!
USAGI?!
I'M...
...GOING.
KOP
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THAT WITH YOU.
I'M YOUR WEAPON, USAGI.
GOEMON...
GRAND-PA!
My back!
URGH!
OW!
I'm still alive and kicking!
KRAK
I'LL BE YOUR WEAPON TOO.

I JUST WANT TO LEARN THE RECIPE FOR THE ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH.
SO I CAN HAVE HANZO'S ARMS AROUND ME AGAIN...
GLOO
I'VE NEVER SEEN THE MASTER SO SERIOUS.
I WANT TO GO BACK TO HAMAMA-TSU...
THE HERMIT IS AN HERBALIST AND A MURDERER?
I WAS SCARED!
THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR ABOUT A 200-YEAR-OLD MAN!
GRANDPA!
AREN'T YOU GOING TO TEACH THAT HERMIT A LESSON?
OH!
VUP
WE'RE NOT THINKING ABOUT TEACHING HIM A LESSON.

HANZO, DID YOU SMOOCH USAGI?
SMOOCH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW SHE WAS.
I GET IT...
AHA!
MASTER TANBA?
Not yet, huh
EH, FORGET IT.


TROMP
TROMP
IF HE LEARNS THAT USAGI AND THE OTHERS WENT TO THE MOUNTAIN OF DEATH, HE'S PROBABLY GOING TO GO AFTER THEM.

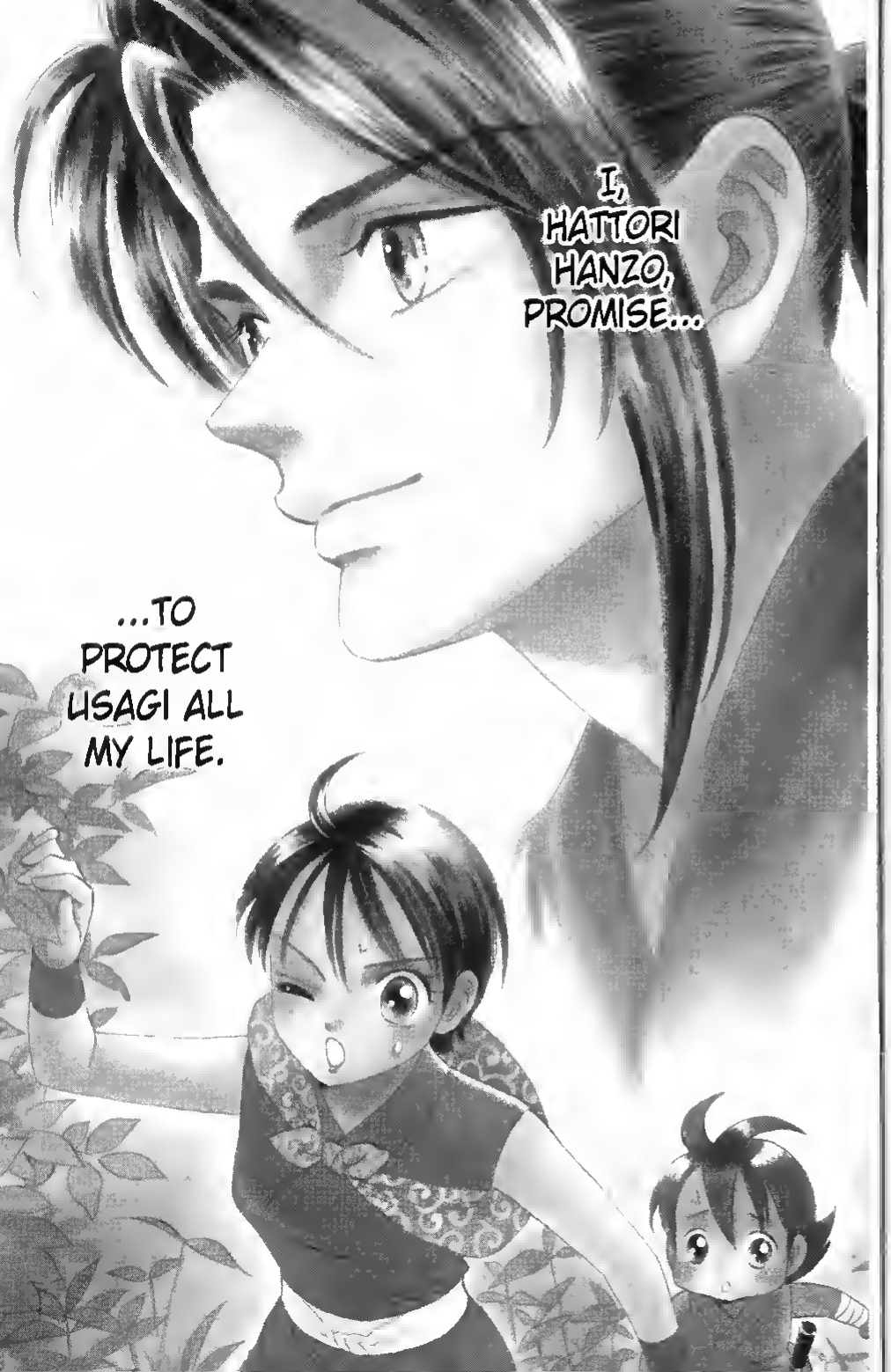
I did try to stop them...
IN ANY CASE, HANZO WILL BE ANGRY WITH ME FOR LETTING USAGI GO TO THE MOUNTAIN OF DEATH.
AND IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO HANZO, THE HATTORI CLAN WOULD HATE ME...
I THINK I'LL KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT.

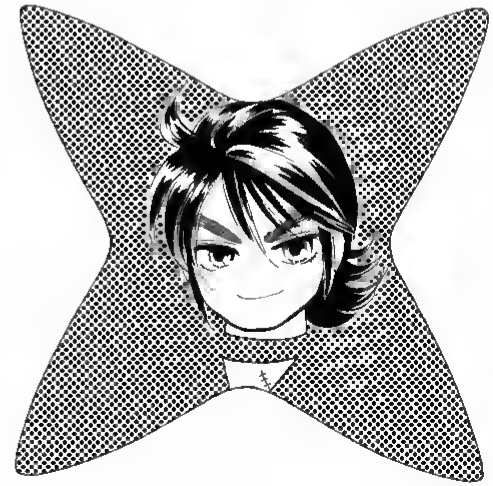
WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR ME TO VISIT USAGI'S PARENTS' GRAVE?
SURE.
IT'S THE ONE WITH THE ROUND ROCK ON THE TOP ON THE HILL IN THE WEST.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

NEXT DAY
MASTER TANBA!!
HUH?
WHERE IS USAGI?!
TROMP
TROMP
OH, HANZO...
huff
huff
I HEARD THIS MORNING THAT USAGI HAD COME BACK FOR A VISIT.
HMM.
SHE LEFT LAST NIGHT.
IS IT AN EMERGENCY?
NO... IT'S NOTHING OF THAT SORT...

THANK YOU VERY MUCH...
...FOR BRINGING USAGI INTO THIS WORLD.
SO THIS IS THE MOUNTAIN OF DEATH?
I'M GOING!
IF I DON'T, I'M NEVER GOING TO GET ANY-WHERE!
U-USAGI, I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD DO THIS.
TH-THUMP
TH-THUMP

PLEASE REST IN PEACE.
I, HATTORI HANZO, PROMISE...
...TO PROTECT USAGI ALL MY LIFE.

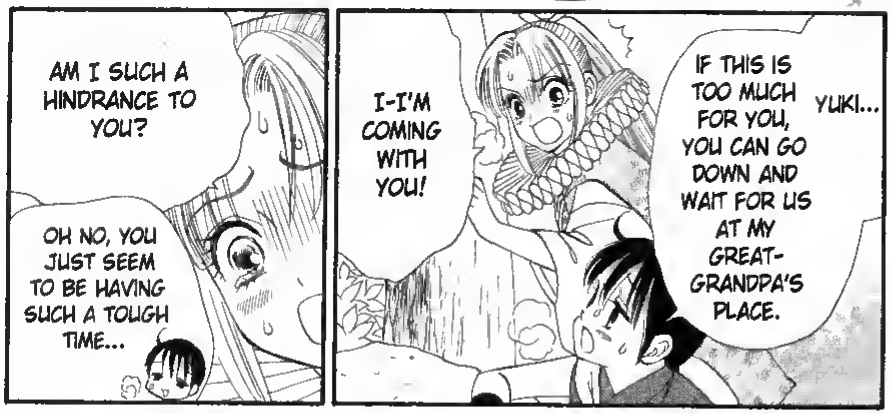

I, HATTORI HANZO, PROMISE...
...TO PROTECT USAGI ALL MY LIFE.



Tail of the Moon

Chapter 21

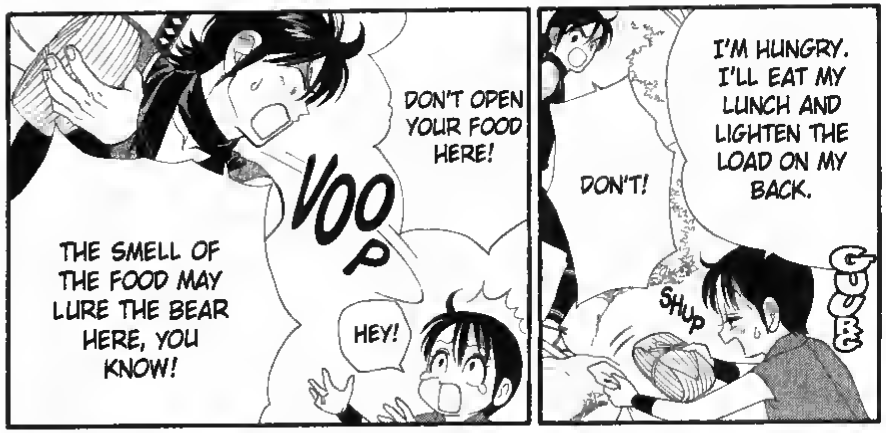
DIDN'T WE HAVE A REST A WHILE AGO?
I want to take a rest too
But...
You can do it!
HEEZE
HEEZE
HUFF
HUFF
TMP
TMP
TMP
HUFF
HUFF
TMP
TMP
TMP
HEEZE
WAIT...
LET'S REST AWHILE...
HEEZE

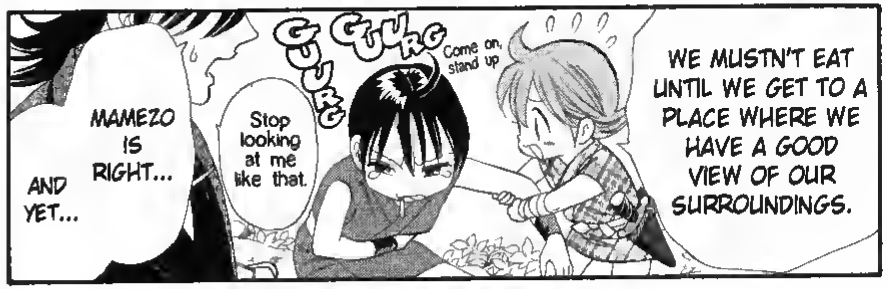

AM I SUCH A HINDRANCE TO YOU?
OH NO, YOU JUST SEEM TO BE HAVING SUCH A TOUGH TIME...
I-I'M COMING WITH YOU!
IF THIS IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU, YOU CAN GO DOWN AND WAIT FOR US AT MY GREAT-GRANDPA'S PLACE.
YUKI...

YOU'RE ALMOST DONE.
YOU DID WELL, MAMEZO.
MAMEZO'S MANY FACES♪
SOB
SOB
SOB
I... HATE DOGS.

GRRR
I'M TIRED...
I'M HUNGRY!
BAIT
DON'T YOU EAT MY PIGLET!
I FEEL LIKE I'M THE ONE WALKING AROUND WITH ALL THE BAIT...

TMP
TMP
HMM.
IT'LL TAKE UNTIL NIGHTFALL IF WE GO AROUND IT.
A CLIFF...
SHOOSH
SHOOSH
WOAH!
THERE'S AN ANIMAL TRAIL OVER THERE.
HUP HUP
W-WE'RE GOING TO CLIMB UP THAT?!
YIP
TUG
HUFF HUFF
HEEZE HEEZE


THE SMELL OF THE FOOD MAY LURE THE BEAR HERE, YOU KNOW!
VOOP
DON'T OPEN YOUR FOOD HERE!
HEY!
I'M HUNGRY. I'LL EAT MY LUNCH AND LIGHTEN THE LOAD ON MY BACK.
DON'T!
SHUP
GUBG


AND YET...
MAMEZO IS RIGHT...
GUBG
Stop looking at me like that.
GUBG
Come on, stand up
WE MUSTN'T EAT UNTIL WE GET TO A PLACE WHERE WE HAVE A GOOD VIEW OF OUR SURROUNDINGS.

HEY, MAMEZO, IS THE PIGLET MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU THAN ME?!
WARGH
THE PIGLET IS MY FRIEND!
STOP SHOUTING AND GET A MOVE ON!!
WARGH
I'LL PROTECT THE PIGLET.
THEY JUST FOLLOWED ME HERE.
MAMEZO, WHY'D YOU BRING THE PIGLET AND PUP WITH YOU?
THEY'RE NOTHING BUT BEAR BAIT!!

YOUR LEG...
...DID YOU HURT IT?
IT'S NOTHING. HURRY UP AND GET ON.
DON'T MOVE THIS TIME.
ZZT
ARE YOU OKAY?
OUCH
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WAS MOVING AROUND!
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!
URGH.
I'LL CLIMB UP BY MYSELF!
DAMN IT.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S BEGINNING TO HURT AT A TIME LIKE THIS...
MNCH MNCH
RUSTLE
I'LL EAT ONE BEFORE THEY COME UP.
MNCH
Come on, Goemon, you can do it!
!!

URRGH! URRGH!
NUUURGH
HURRY UP AND CLIMB.
DRAT!
...
YOU'RE TOO HEAVY, USA.
OKAY.
YOU CAN CLIMB UP TOO.
GRIP
CHECKING FOR DANGER
VEEN VEEN

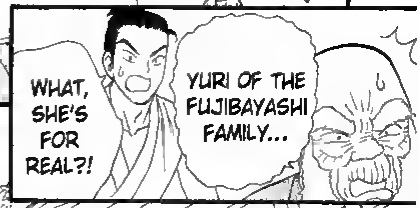
I SHOULD HAVE TRAINED YOU WHEN YOU WERE STILL SMALL, USAGI...
HEE
OH, THIS IS SO EASY! ♪

ZZT
URGH!
DOMP
WHAT HAPPENED?
AARGH!
EEEEK!
AAARGH, IT'S SO HIGH UP!
GOOD LUCK!
TWO MORE LAPS...
PHEW
STOP MOVING OR I'LL TO FALL!

"I CANNOT LET YOU STAY HERE AS MY PROSPECTIVE BRIDE ANY LONGER."
"YURI..."
HANZO TOLD ME THIS MORNING...
I'M NOT HANZO'S PROSPECTIVE BRIDE ANYMORE.
WHAT?!
"I'VE MADE MY DECISION."
WELL...
SO...
HUH.
...WHERE'S GOEMON?!
HE'S WITH USAGI AGAIN, ISN'T HE?
HE PICKED USAGI?!
WHO KNOWS?
IT'S NONE OF MY CONCERN ANYMORE.

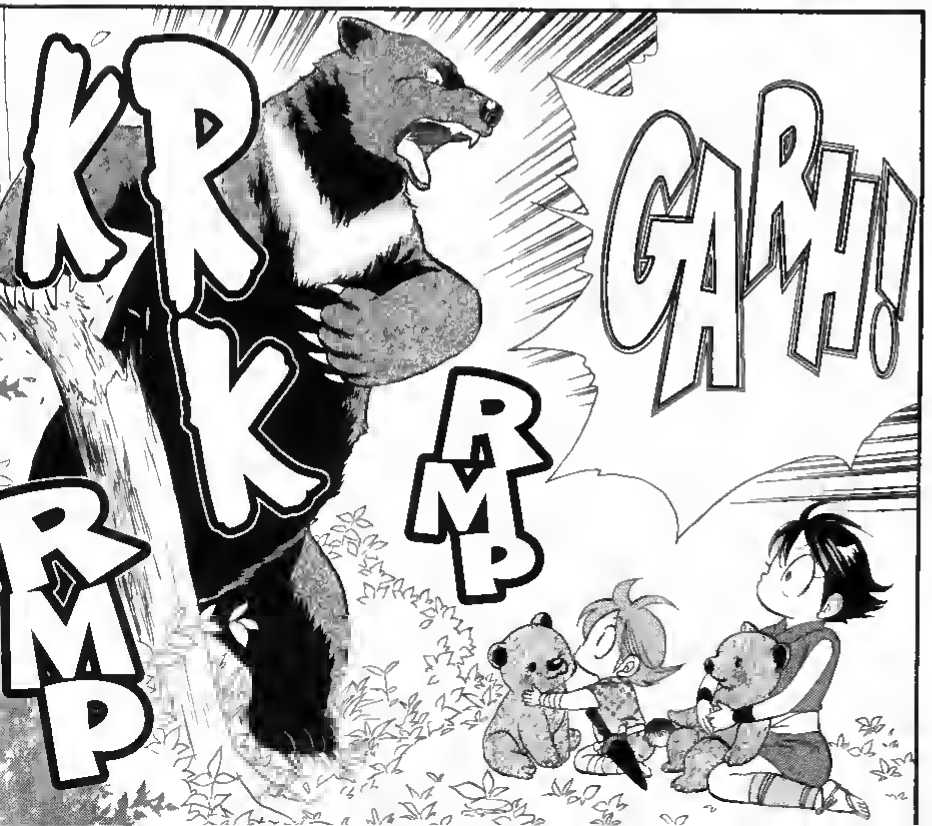
YES. SHE CLAIMS TO BE A KUNOICHI OF THE FUJIBAYASHI FAMILY, AND I WAS WONDERING WHAT I SHOULD DO WITH HER.
I HEAR THERE'S SOMEONE WHO'S STILL ALIVE AFTER BEING CAUGHT IN THE TRAP AT THE BRIDGE.
HOJIRO

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT MY GRANDFATHER IS FUJIBAYASHI NAGATO, A HIGH-RANKING NINJA?!
LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT!!


WHAT, SHE'S FOR REAL?!
YURI OF THE FUJIBAYASHI FAMILY...

BLUSH
I CAME TO SEE GOEMON.
GOEMON?
AREN'T YOU HATTORI HANZO'S PROSPECTIVE BRIDE?
AND WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR, YURI?
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
MY GRAND-FATHER WILL HEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO ME!

TOMP
DASH
LET GO OF THOSE CUBS, AND CLIMB UP SOMEWHERE QUICKY!
...IT WON'T MOVE.
MY LEG...
OW.
RMPRMPRMPRMP
KISS
KISS
GOEMON?


KRKRMP
GARH!

WADDLE WADDLE
BWEEE
IT'S A CUB.

JUMP
WHAT'S THE MATTER?!
AAARGH
AH?
USA!

ADORABLE!

I WANT TO KEEP THIS CUB AS A PET.
HUG
ROLL ROLL
OOH, IT'S SO CUTE!
PAT
PAT
DON'T TOUCH THEM!!

TOK
TOK
FWASH
VIP
DAMN MY LEG!
AAAAARGH!
NOOO!
WAAARGH!
RMP
RMP
RMP
THIS DOESN'T LOOK GOOD...
THIS ISN'T GOOD AT ALL...
THUP
USAGI...
SHAA
EAAARGH!
M-MY SWORD!
OH!

EEEEK!
FLUP
FLUP
POK
!!
AH!
WAAH!
USAGI!
B-BEAR...
...LET GO OF USAGI!
USA...
CHOMP
CHOMP
OUCH!
THWAK
VEEE
VEEE
SHOOP
GRRGH!

HUFF
HUFF
YU...
YURI?!
BLUSH
GOEMON...
♡

LO
NP
THUNK
OOF!
TONK
SHAA

BLUSH
YOU'RE NOT?!
WELL, I...
...CAN'T LIE ABOUT MY TRUE FEELINGS ANYMORE. ♡
THEN I'M THE ONLY PROSPECTIVE BRIDE LEFT?!

AND BY THE WAY, I'M NO LONGER HANZO'S PROSPECTIVE BRIDE.
HUH?

I DON'T KNOW.
WHO IS IT?!
MAYBE IT'S MY SISTER, YUNA?
HEH

WOOHOO!!
MADE...
...HIS DECISION?
HE TOLD ME THAT HE'S MADE HIS DECISION.

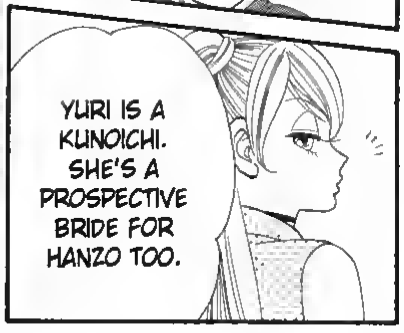
YUNA BECAME A PROSPECTIVE BRIDE TOO.
WHAT?!
BUT YOUR SISTER IS BETTER LOOKING THAN YOU, AND SHE'S EVEN QUALIFIED AS A NINJA, RIGHT?!
Hey!

WHY IS SHE SO SPITEFUL?!
BUT YOU STILL HELPED ME.
I'LL NEVER TOUCH A BEAR AGAIN!
YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN EATEN BY THAT BEAR, USAGI!
YOU IDIOT!!
I WAS HELPING GOEMON!
Now, now...

YURI, HOW DID YOU FIND OUT WE WERE HERE?
AHH! ♡
I WAS ONLY DOING MY JOB. ♡
THANKS A LOT, YURI.
YOU REALLY SAVED THE DAY...

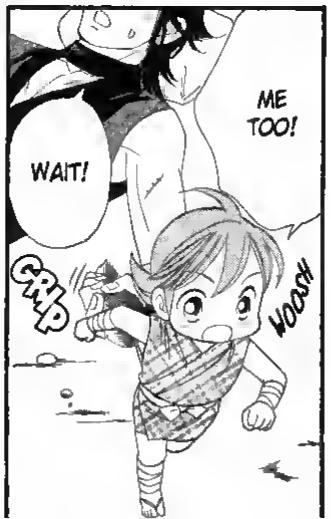
THIS IS YUKI, MY SENIOR HERBALIST AT HAMAMATSU.
YURI.
N-NICE TO MEET YOU...
ACK!
He's prettier than I am!!

WHO IS SHE?
USAGI...
AH
I ASKED IN HOJIRO.


YURI IS A KUNOICHI. SHE'S A PROSPECTIVE BRIDE FOR HANZO TOO.

WHO BROKE THEM?!
BOTH YOUR LEGS ARE BAD, GOEMON?!
N-NO...
I'LL GET YOUR REVENGE FOR YOU!
URGH.
OW!
YOUR RIGHT LEG WAS BROKEN TOO, RIGHT?
I...I JUST MESSED UP DURING MY ASSIGNMENT...
I'LL GO AND COLLECT SOME HERBS.
I'LL COME TOO.

I WANT YOU TO MAKE ME A FIRE, MAMEZO.
YURI, I'M SORRY, CAN YOU GO AND GET ME SOME WATER?
OKAY.
OF COURSE!


ME TOO!
WAIT!
GRIP
WOOSH

ACTUALLY, YUNA'S ALREADY GONE BACK HOME BUT...
WHO KNOWS?
TELL ME! TELL ME!
AND HE'S ALREADY DECIDED ON HER?!

YOUR MISSION IS TO CREATE THE ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH AND RETURN TO IGA, RIGHT?
OUCH.
WAH!
WAH!
WHAT SHOULD I DO...?

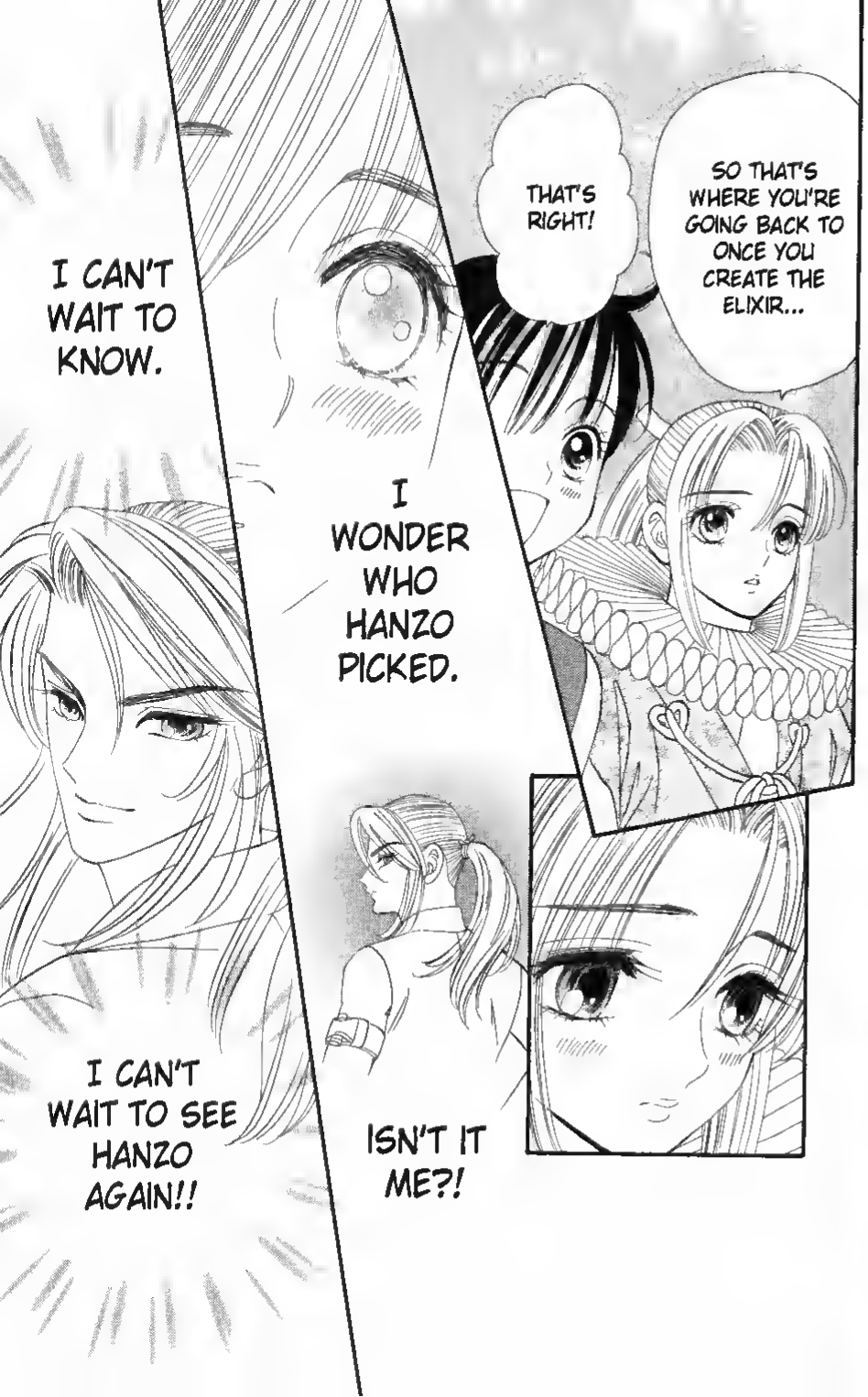
IT WAS BROKEN BY SOMEBODY, WASN'T IT?

YUKI, CAN YOU TAKE A LOOK AT IT?
Oh, I forgot.
DOES YOUR LEG HURT?

OUCH!
HE BROKE HIS LEG THIS SPRING, AND IT'S STILL BOTHERING HIM.
LET ME SEE.
THIS BONE FRACTURE...

GOEMON...
...ARE YOU GOING TO DIE?
EVEN SO, WHO'S GOING TO PROTECT USAGI UNTIL MY LEGS GET BETTER?
BOIT
USA WILL MAKE A MEDICINE THAT'LL CURE YOUR LEGS!!
THAT'D BE NICE.
WAARGH
HEY, DON'T ACT LIKE I'M DYING!
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
DON'T DIE!!
WHAT'S YOUR JOB, MAMEZO?
UH-HUH...
IF YOU KEEP BEING A CRYBABY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO PROTECT USAGI.
SOB
TO PROTECT USA...
THAT'S RIGHT.

FWISH
IT'S LIT! ♪
KRIK
KLAK KLAK KLAK
LET ME TRY.
KLAK KLAK KLAK
MAMEZO.
I WANT YOU TO GROW UP QUICKLY.
SHUP SHUP
FWOO
HUH?
I CAN'T PROTECT USAGI ANYMORE WITH THESE LEGS.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, GOEMON?
...AND PROTECT USAGI FOR ME.
GROW UP QUICKLY...


I CAN'T WAIT TO KNOW.
I WONDER WHO HANZO PICKED.
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE HANZO AGAIN!!
ISN'T IT ME?!
THAT'S RIGHT!
SO THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE GOING BACK TO ONCE YOU CREATE THE ELIXIR...

HERE'S THE COCCULUS TRILOBUS.
PROTECTING USAGI'S HAPPINESS IS OUR JOB...

HE'S ALWAYS SMILING SO I COULDN'T TELL.
I DIDN'T KNOW GOEMON HAD PROBLEMS WITH BOTH LEGS.

I'VE GOT TO BE KINDER TO HIM FROM NOW ON...
THAT'S HOJIRO OVER THERE WITH THE YELLOW PATCHES OF FIELD...
...AND BEHIND THAT MOUNTAIN STRAIGHT AHEAD OF US IS SEGACHI, WHERE HANZO LIVES.
YOU CAN GET A GOOD VIEW OF IGA FROM HERE.
YUKI, COME OVER HERE.

...PLEASE STOP MAKING SUCH IMPOSSIBLE REQUESTS ABOUT MAKING AN ELIXIR OF ETERNAL YOUTH!
THAT'S RIGHT! BUT I'LL DO MY BEST!
USAGI'S STUPIDITY MUST HAVE RUBBED OFF ON THAT SENIOR HERBALIST.
HOW SAD...
THEY SURE ARE CHEERFUL.
USA?
HERE WE GO!
I CAN HEAR USAGI'S STUPID CRY FROM THE MOUNTAINS.
LOOKS LIKE SHE'S STILL ALIVE.
HUH?

HANZO!!
JOLT
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I WAS PULLING MYSELF TOGETHER.
TRY IT, YUKI. IT'S REFRESHING.
TH THUMP
TH THUMP
M-MY LORD...
YEAH, THAT'S THE WAY!
WAIT FOR ME, HANZO!
PULLING YOURSELF TOGETHER ?!

I...
ZZZ
ZZZZZ
...JUST WANT TO BE ABLE TO PROTECT USAGI'S SMILE...
TO BE CONTINUED...

I'M ASHAMED.
I WAS THE ONE WHO NEEDED HELP...
MM... HANZO...

Page 73, panel 4: A ninja's secret outing
The original Japanese text is a pun: *shinobi no oshinobi*. *Shinobi* is another way to say "ninja," and *oshinobi* is a word used to describe a "secret outing" of someone of high status

Page 121, sidebar: Sasuke or Azumi
Sasuke and *Azumi* are manga series about ninja

Page 129, panel 1: Fairy
This is a *zashiki-warashi*, or a Japanese fairy that brings good fortune to the family of the house where it is living

The ways of the ninja are mysterious indeed, so here is a glossary of terms to help you navigate the intricacies of their world.

Page 7, panel 3: Big earlobes
There is a Japanese saying in which people with large earlobes are likely to get rich. This is because Fuku no Kami, the god of good luck and fortune, is depicted with large earlobes.

Page 11, panel 9: Mokume Obake
Mokume Obake is a name given to ghosts that rise up from wooden ceilings. When looking at the wood grain in darkness, faces may look like they are appearing from the wood. *Mokume Obake* literally means "Wood Grain Ghost."

Page 19, panel 2: Irori
An *irori* is a traditional Japanese fireplace inside the house.

Page 38, panel 7: I...Ro...Ha...
These are the first 3 syllables of the *Iroha-uta*, a song/poem that is written by using every hiragana character only once. It was often used in the old days to teach Japanese hiragana to children.

Page 39, panel 1: Ninja dog
A "ninja dog," or *ninken*, is a dog specially trained to help ninja.

Page 45, sidebar: Iga-ryu
Iga-ryu means "in the style of Iga."

Page 2: Shimo no Hanzo
Shimo no means "the Lower," and in this case refers to Hanzo's geographic location rather than social status.

Page 2: Iga
Iga is a region on the island of Kyushu, and also the name of the famous ninja clan that originated there. Another area famous for its ninja is Koga, in the Shiga prefecture on Honshu. Many books claim that these two ninja clans were mortal enemies, but in reality inter-ninja relations were not as bad as stories paint them.

Page 2: Kami no Hanzou
The term *kami no* means "the Upper," and can refer to social status. However, since Hanzou is a member of a branch family, it is very unlikely that his status is higher than that of the head of the entire clan, Hanzo. The term *kami no* can also refer to geographic location in relation to an important city center, such as the capital. Hanzou is from Okazaki, which is closer to Edo than Hanzo's home in Segachi.

Page 3: Kuwabara
"Kuwabara kuwabara" is a phrase used nowadays by old people whenever something fearful or scary happens.

I have written up to volume 3, and the personality of each character has begun to stand out much more now. This is especially true of Hanzo, whom I never expected to change so much when I started this series. This must be the so-called "character development." I'm sure that these characters will keep growing and developing, so I will be very glad if you would all keep a close watch on them.

–Rinko Ueda